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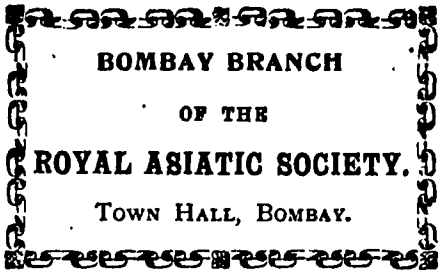

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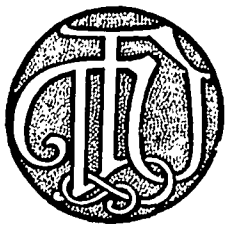
AN ARTIST IN THE HIMALAYAS



AN ARTIST IN THE HIMALAYAS

By A. D. McCORMICK

ILLUSTRATED BY OVER 100 ORIGINAL SKETCHES MADE ON THE JOURNEY

LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN
PATERNOSTER SQUARE. 1895

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PREFACE

IN this book, which certainly has no pretensions to be literature, an art by no means within my province, I have attempted to give an idea of the picturesque aspect of the expedition rather than of the geographical portion. How admirably that was done by Sir William Conway is known now to all the world. But if our leader had attempted to tell everything, his book would have reached the proportions of a Biographical Dictionary or of the Encyclopædia Britannica; and in confining it to reasonable limits he may thus have left a chance for one of the members of his expedition to contribute a more personal narrative.

The illustrations are merely reproductions from notes in my sketch book of any little incident or scene that may have struck me during the marches.

A. MORROW
26/1/92

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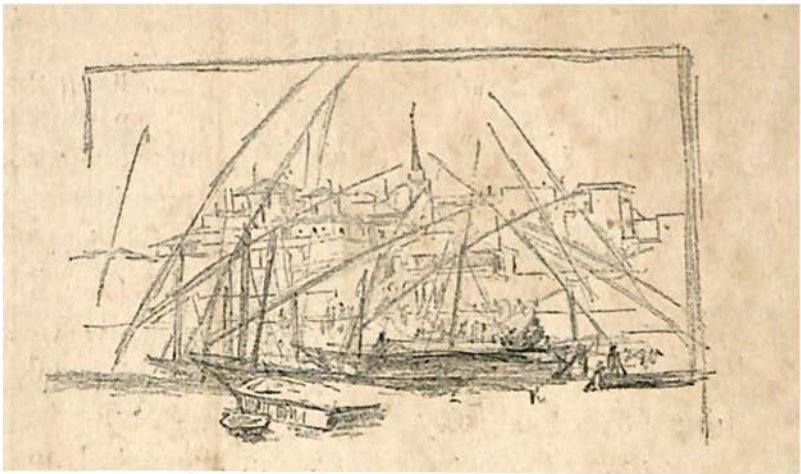


AN ARTIST IN THE HIMALAYAS.

CHAPTER I.

CHELSEA TO KARACHI.

EARLY in the winter of 1891, Jack Roude-bush and I were sitting in my Chelsea studio with two other friends discussing not a little gloomily the difficulties of making a living at Art. We were by no means sure that our lack of success was not our own fault, and one of us had something to say about the immorality of big men doing no more with their strength than handle a brush when there was real work to be done in the world which was not purely decorative, though it might lead to decorations.

We came to the conclusion that if things did not so improve as to signify to us that we were really wanted, we would try farming or cattle herding, or anything calculated to give some starved faculties a chance. One of my friends having been born in Africa, which he left when he was two years old, declared himself an authority on the prospects open to young men in that country, and suggested we should try it.

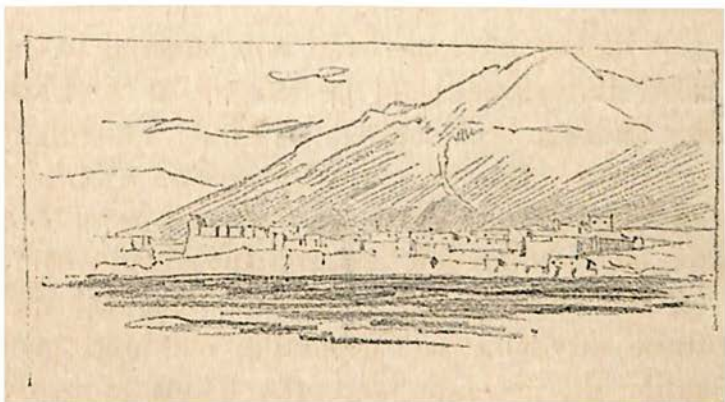
A month later we bade him farewell in the East India Docks, for he was off to the Cape for at least six months; and only a fortnight later my other friend, who was an architect and surveyor, greeted me with the news that he had obtained a government appointment on the West Coast of Africa. His task was to be surveying and designing buildings in a sunburnt, desolate land, the haunt of many fevers. But he was glad all the same, and rejoiced at getting away to something, after living on sucking his artistic thumbs in a Chelsea by-street.

And then Jack and I were left to wonder if we were ever going to get our chance of malaria and wild travel and strange adventure in the unknown.

For what I knew was bounded on the east

by London, and on the west by Belfast. I pined for something better than reading stories of places and things. Jack, who knew many places and phases of life, pined only for something new. But our time was coming.

One day Jack came in big with exciting news. His friend Mr. Conway (now Sir William M. Conway) was to lead a surveying and climbing expedition through the Hima-



layas, and through parts of it which meant real original exploration. He thought of taking an artist with him, and so, said Jack, it was just possible that he might select me. He had seen some work of mine which had pleased him.

If Art had led so far it had done something, I began to see some use in it, even beyond boiling pots and painting pictures which the

world unanimously refused to buy or even to look at.

But it was only a chance after all, until one evening when my friend Jack came to me in a state of radiant happiness, bringing Conway with him.

"Here," said he, "is Conway; he wants to speak to you."

When he asked me if I should like to go to the Himalayas to sketch, I was nearly replying by asking him if a duck would swim, but restrained my enthusiasm, and merely remarked weakly that I should like it very much.

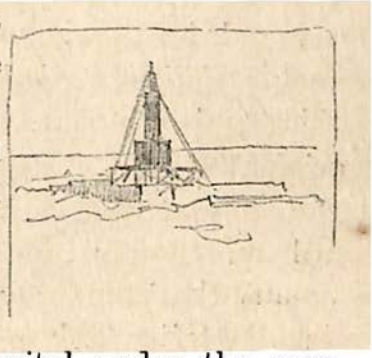
Conway said it was possible he might take me, and pumped me as to my views of painting mountains; for most artists certainly manage to make molehills of them, and he wanted them to look like real hills.

My experience of mountains was not at that time great, in fact, I think the Mourne Mountains in County Down were the nearest to an apology for a mountain which I had seen, but I managed to make him believe that if there was any man who could and would do the trick loftily, I was that man.

After a few days of fevered expectation I had a telegram saying, "I have arranged for you to go to Himalayas. Conway."

But what of Jack? He declined to be left out in the cold. Of the four who had discussed misery and Art, one was at the Cape, another at Lagos, and the third was booked for the Karakoram Mountains. It was obviously impossible that the fourth should stay in England, and study life coldly in marble, or make counterfeit presentments of indifferent people in common clay.

Perhaps it was his indignation that heated him over much and left him a victim to the draughts of my studio, but he immediately had influenza and was threatened with congestion of the lungs, and had to be transferred to a nursing hospital under the care of my friend, Dr. Tom Robinson. It was some time before I discovered the little plan he had concocted, but when I found him egging on the doctor to prescribe a sea voyage for him, I began to have some suspicions; these were converted into amused certainty when he gloomily suggested that he was a likely subject for consumption, and that from what he had heard of Davos and other



mountain stations, a high altitude was the very thing to prevent any evil results following his illness. When the doctor agreed that there was something in this view, Jack coolly suggested the Himalayas as a new place to test modern theories in, and asked whether it would be too far. And of course the end of it was that Jack worked his point, and was admitted to our adventurous band. He made a good recovery at once, and only coughed badly when any one threw doubts on his ability to climb or to stand the hardships which are always to be looked for on original explorations.

So now the numbers of the expedition were full up. It was composed of Conway; Lieutenant the Honourable C. G. Bruce, of the 1st Battalion 5th Gurkhas; Zurbriggen, a well-known Swiss guide from Macugnaga; Colonel Lloyd-Dicken—who only went with us to Gilgit; O. Eckenstein; Jack Roudebush, and myself. And taking us all round, with very few exceptions, I think we were a hard and fit crowd to do almost anything.

The world knows now all about our leader; but it is a curious thing that a man, who up to that time had been principally known as a writer on Art, should almost suddenly blossom

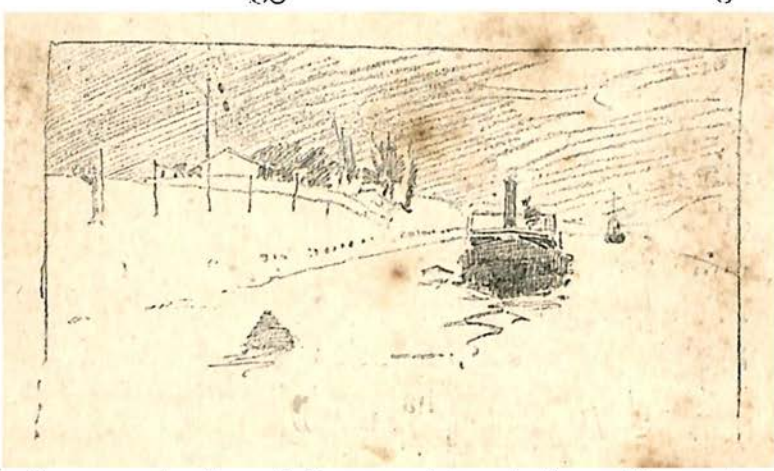
into a man of action, and a born leader of men. Of late, people who know very little have called him "a man of one book." In remembering his travels they have forgotten his "Wood-cutters of the Netherlands," a most learned and valuable contribution to the history of engraving, to say nothing of other equally important works.* But to those who went with him into the Himalayas he certainly stands more as the man of deeds than the man of words. His endurance of toil, his tact in the management of many races of men, his unfailing readiness of resource, and his absolute foresight, mark him as one among a thousand. That he made the expedition a success we all know, but few know the difficulties with which he contended, nor the happy, bright temper with which he combated them.

And to choose a man like Bruce, of the Gurkhas, as one of the expedition, showed his knowledge of men. For Bruce, too, had the disposition which is full of fight and

* A history of Flemish Art, a work on the Literary Remains of Albert Drurer, a study of Reynolds and Gainsborough, and "The Dawn of Art," which deals with pre-historic Art, and the Arts of Chaldæa, Assyria, Egypt, and other early civilisations.

courage, with the power and weight that can absolutely crush obstacles. He and his Gurkhas were an infinite help to us. And while England has men like him to lead, and those he commands to follow, she may sit serene on the sunny side of India's northern boundary.

But Bruce was not with us all the time, while Zurbriggen never left us. Though



Conway had not known him before, there is little doubt that if he were to lead another difficult expedition, it would be a great disappointment to him if he were unable to have the gallant and fiery but skilful Swiss, who was capable of boiling over like a geyser, and of subsiding afterwards in a most placid pool. Mountains to him existed to be climbed; while he climbed he sang or

jodelled. And he had his ambitions of book-making. He made sketches or notes all the time, and often when he had outpaced us on a difficult piece of road, he would sit down and make new notes while we toiled up the slopes behind him.

Bruce had gone on to India before us, as his leave was up, and Colonel Dicken also; we were to meet both of them at Abbottabad. The rest of us got to know each other well before we reached India; and as I heard the yarns of those who had done the strenuous things I wished to do, I often had moments when I feared that I should not reach the standard of excellence to which they had attained. But I meant doing my best, and so did Jack.

The voyage out was a revelation to me and a fit preface to something stranger still.

We went out on a cargo steamer—not in one of the big passenger boats—and having very few fellow travellers, we were much freer than we should otherwise have been. The comparative slowness of our passage was nothing to me when everything was of such infinite interest. I even enjoyed the pitch and toss of a good rough time in

the Bay of Biscay; and fighting our way through the Straits of Gibraltar with a strong easterly gale blowing in our teeth gave me plenty of time to make notes of Terefa and the Rock, for with wind and current against her the *Ocampo* made no very rapid headway.

But it was not till we reached Port Said that the real interest of the passage commenced; for trivial as it seemed afterwards

when I had known the glory of India and the real Orient, it is at any rate the Gate of the East. One sees the motley of two contending civilizations in that city of roughs and outcasts; and there are camels in the streets; then the thousand-time-described scene of the demon-like coolies loading the coal, yelling and surging and moaning strange cries, as they run up and down the gang planks, caught hold of me. I watched them in the cloud of dust, and

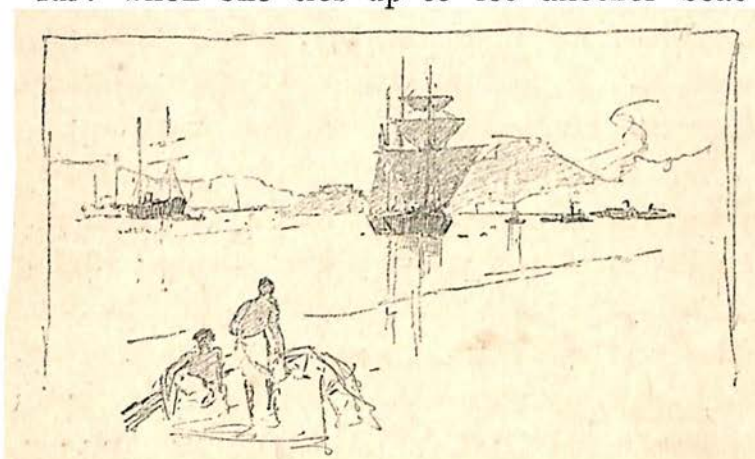
as I choked I dreamed, and the Old World and the East opened out to me.

Jack and I went ashore with the doctor of the ship, who told us he knew all about the place. I daresay he knew something of it, but not all, for when our curiosity led us from one thing to another until we seemed near disaster, I don't think he fancied himself then. For we got by the merest chance into some kind of a low den in which there were strange ruffians and dancing girls, and all sorts of devilry, and on our attempting to crush out through them in the darkness, I found myself in a passage leading into a street, but barred by an iron grating. I was the only one caught, for the rest were outside, and the crowd round me were by no means calculated to cheer me. I seized hold of one and threatened to shoot him if I wasn't let out. As my friends on the other side of the bars were threatening them with the police, they finally let me go, and I decided on having a better guide next time I went exploring the purlieus of an Eastern town.

Then came the Suez Canal, and the strange aspect of the deserts with their herds of camels. By day we dreamed under the

awning. But I wrote to my two friends in Africa, telling where I was and whither I was going; I felt quite sorry for them. They were staying in such common and common-place parts of the world, while I was drifting through enchantment to something stranger still.

But night in the Canal is the most wonderful: when one ties up to let another boat



pass, one sees at first its white eye, the big search-light, that grows and grows and turns the sand into piles of drifting snow; then it shoots over and past, and the gloomy ship glides by with its unknown folk who cheer. And then on again through the lakes, by day shallow and green, but at night dark waters illuminated with lighted buoys, till they look like a Chinese garden.

Then came Suez, with the old town in the distance, and the neat white buildings of the Canal officials round the Canal's mouth into the Red Sea; the seas are bright green, and the cliffs burn bright red, and are reflected redly. But this I did not see till my return.

In the dull, hot sea we only wearied for India. We forgot our longings for a time in Aden, for that was the Orient without a doubt. It was not the dirty swirl of two opposing civilisations as at Port Said.

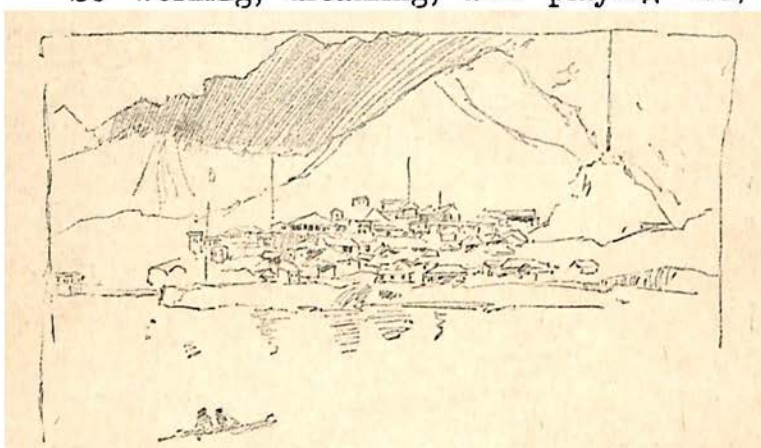
We saw the Camel Market, and rubbed shoulders with twenty races, and drank thick coffee in windowless coffee divans, while outside the sun was glowing like molten steel. It is a glaring, white-hot hell, and the buildings in the open almost blind one with the reflected light. The clothes the people wear are extreme in tint, they shine in primary colours; but many are half naked, as we wished to be before our time was done.

Then we went on board and watched the boys swim or dive as if they were fish and in their native element.

All this time, both ashore and at sea, I was perpetually sketching and painting, try-

ing to screw my tones up to the light and colour: and everything I did annoyed and disgusted me, my brightest work looked black; pure vermilion seemed as if it was fit to paint a water-can with, but it was no use to an artist, and as to pure ultramarine, the sea knocked it out of time clean and for ever.

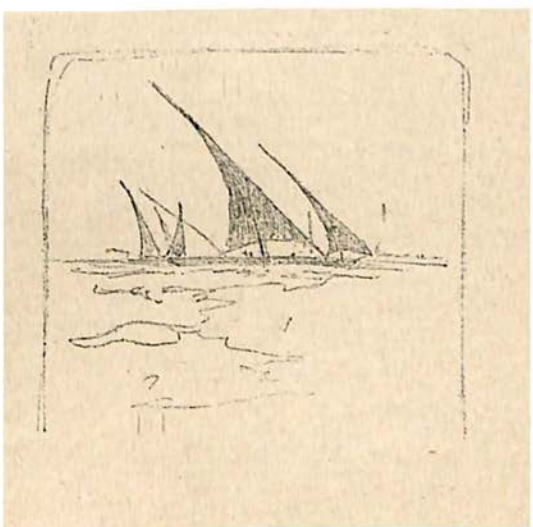
So working, dreaming, and playing loo,



we went on eastward through the Arabian Sea and across the mouth of the Persian Gulf. There for the first time I saw the phosphorescence of the sea. The steamer cut her way through hollow golden green fire and strange green bronze, and the bow waves, going off into the darkness, looked like flaming serpents lazily rolling in dark oil. Sometimes we lay on deck, and before

sleeping watched the blood-red moon sink below the horizon. Like the sinking sun it touched the sea and flattened its orb, and then it bit into the water, and as it gradually went under its wake glittered, and glittering died, until its upper limb alone remained like a strange star that was suddenly extinguished.

So we came to Karachi and were at last in India.



CHAPTER II.

KARACHI TO SRINAGAR.

KARACHI is now to me only a big burning blot of colour—sashes, turbans, and fierce sunlight. But there is no glamour of any kind about the modern built town. It is ugly and vilely dusty, and most of the streets are named after a Mackintosh, or some other Scotchman; it seemed as if Scotland owned or built it. But I hadn't much of it to endure, for we left by the 10 p.m. train, and ran off into moonlit plains of enchantment, mystery, and wonder. I could not wake myself out of the dream—for I was in a dream surely—I might pinch myself if I liked, but the vision would not pass. And so we ran on through the night.

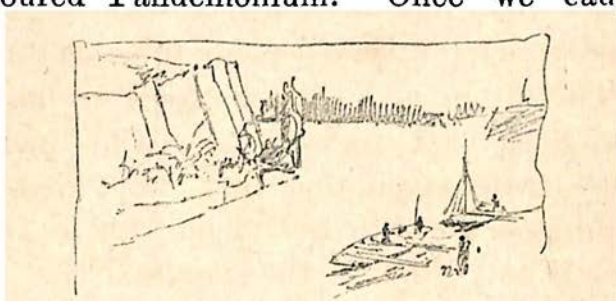
At Badau we stopped for breakfast. And much of the wonder was gone from me. For instead of the cool moonlight and low tones, which were suggestive only, came the brutal realism of direct sunlight in a tired, weary landscape, where all the trees and shrubs were thick with dust. As we stopped at each station, from the carriages which held natives protruded a hundred lean, bare, uncanny arms and hands, each with a little brass pot, to be filled from the water-skin of the *bhesti*, who yelled "Pawnee! Paw-nee!" till his throat must have been dry enough to need his whole supply.

But as we ran on and came nearer the Indus the landscape began to look greener and fresher and more promising. And when we crossed the great river we had one beautiful bit of scenery. For on an island, round which the broad stream swept, stood a fort and some rajah's palace, and by it were curious boats which dark-skinned natives were loading. As I looked down through the lattice-work of the bridge, I again seemed to think that nothing was real and that I dreamt once more.

After another night in the train we were in Lahore, and in real India at last. We took a carriage and drove to the Fort. A very stolid

and excessively English Tommy Atkins showed us over the beautiful old palace, with its inlaid and perforated marble screens, and its walls covered with myriad strange decorations. On the roof we had a grand view of the great mosque with its walled courtyard, the square-roofed houses of the town that vibrated in the intense heat, and of the cool, green, distant landscape with its trees.

We went through the town, and it was coloured Pandemonium. Once we caught



sight of some young natives playing cricket, but that familiar thing was swallowed up in a moment by a strange blaze of colour that made my head fairly reel with its intensity. The crowded natives, through whom our driver forced his way, cursed him picturesquely, but salaamed humbly to his fares; and the din of their jabbering was most infernal and deafening. To come to the railway station was like leaving some gigantic

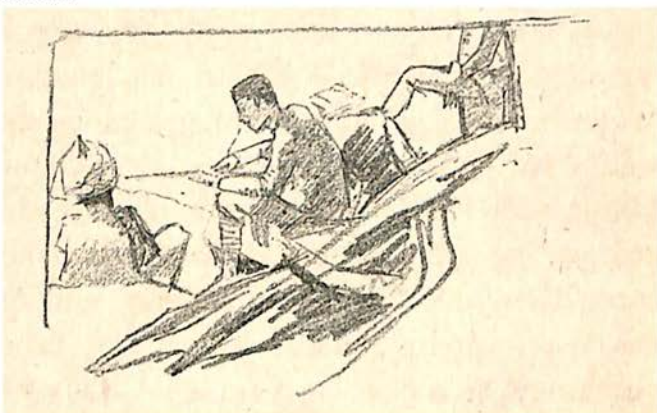
show. And now I knew the East had never been painted. And I doubted greatly if it ever would be.

Conway and Jack decided to stay the night in Lahore, but Zurbriggen, Eckenstein, and I went on to Hassan Abdal. When we reached it at noon next day we found tongas and ekkas waiting for us, and we dashed off over well-kept roads and past villages with all their native life open to view, dancing dervishes here, and women spinning there, and amid general salaams came to Abbottabad, to find Bruce and Dicken expecting us.

I slept, and was awakened by jackals. They made me jump at first. But that was nothing, and had to be put up with in India. I could only think of the time and the place and the work to be done when Conway came next day.

As I have said, or implied, I had never seen a snow mountain. And indeed I had never till this trip been in any country outside the limits of the British Isles. So suddenly to find myself in the neighbourhood of the highest mountains in the world was, in spite of all my mental preparation for them, an

exceedingly strange experience to me. For now, when the voyage was over and the railway journey done, it seemed to me that all the intermediate steps were wiped out. I forgot the seas and skies of the voyage; and the quick run through the plains and the foothills almost to the heart of the first chain of the Himalayas was no more than a dream. I had come at one step into a land of visions.



This feeling of strangeness never quite left me through all the journey, for no sooner did I become accustomed to the work and the constant risks than I had to face something newer and something greater still, which renewed a feeling in me which resembled fear, and was perhaps rather wonder. But even in all the toil and danger, the glory of the unknown gave me many compensations.

After our arrival in Abbottabad, we found that instead of leaving at once as we had planned, we had to wait nearly three weeks for our luggage. But the officers of the garrison were more than hospitable, and made our visit so pleasant, that only our work and the desire we had to go on and upward could have drawn us away.

My first attempt at climbing was a rank failure, though the hill was only 4,000 feet high, and easy grass slope at that; yet with a few days' practice I began to feel somewhat firmer on my legs, and could get along fairly well. In this country it is never any trouble taking sketching materials, for one can order any loafing native who is hanging about to carry them for two or three *pice*, and every ounce of weight tells if one is not used to climbing. This, at least, made things easier for me.

Bruce had arranged a trip to Tandiani—a summer resort of the Europeans of Abbottabad—and a beat for game about the hills there next day. All the morning active preparations were going on; laughing Gurkhas here, there, and everywhere, bundling up food and blankets, and loading mules with the spirits of a lot of schoolboys off for a holiday. At

last all were ready—thirteen Gurkhas in the glory of white, lemon, purple, and pink turbans, seven mules, and six coolies, making a most imposing expedition. Bruce, Jack,

and I, with Zurbriggen, left at noon, and as the climb was nothing but an afternoon's run to the men of the place, who, in fact, think nothing of going there and back in a day,

Bruce thought we should be at the top by half-past four at least. It was a bad calculation, as he found out later, with two such green ones as Jack and I.

The first half of the way was pleasant, though very hot, and the unusual character of the scenery and of the natives kept my mind from dwelling on the fatigue that was growing upon me. The newness of it all was delightful. There were smiling and salaaming natives working on the road or in their patches of field, and Bruce's salutation of "*Salàam Gi*" made them all grin as if they were delighted to see us. Parbir, who had been with Bruce in England, was trying to sing "Two Lovely Black Eyes," while his companions sang and shouted and larked about, as if they were on Plumstead Marshes instead of a road as steep as a ladder. There were many rests for us by the way, for every brook and waterfall was an excuse, and the much-sought-after tobacco was given with unsparing hand to fill the Gurkhas' *chelum*—which they suck through a wet rag, and hand

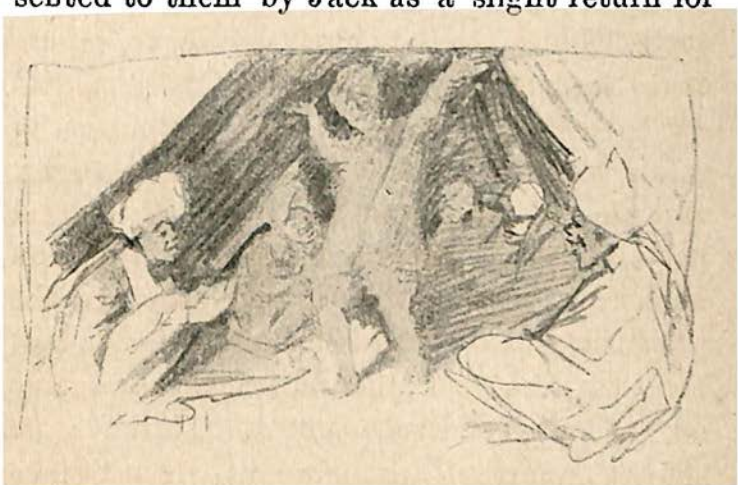
round to each other—to make the delay a little longer. When about half-way up, and after a longer rest than usual below what looked an impossible pine-covered hill, Bruce said we must make haste or we should be benighted, and to be out on the mountain without shelter was more than any of us could stand. Jack and I said we were ready, but when the boys coolly started up this impossible slope, it was with sinking hearts that we looked at each other and began to climb; and worst of all was the fact that it was fun to everybody else. Our pace grew slower and slower; from twenty yards at a time it came to ten, and then to five, to two and one, and then a dead stop. Jack and I were done. Bruce picked me up on his broad back for a yard or two, but I was too much for him, and he put me down. After resting for a few minutes, I suddenly and unaccountably felt all right. Perhaps it was the sight of Jack on a Gurkha, for it would have made a goat laugh to see a soldier about four feet nothing climbing on hands and knees with a six foot three man on his back, and one Gurkha ready to take the other's place, and all as cheerful as crickets. But night was coming on fast, and Jack having actually

become unconscious, the situation was serious, for the winter snow, not yet melted, had obliterated the path. Very soon night was upon us, and the dark gloom of the thick pine forest, lit with a dim light from the snow, the dark forms of the Gurkhas in advance looking for the way, the slow march with our heavy burden, the bitter cold, and the silence, for none spoke, made a most impressive scene. At last a break in the trees disclosed the hut, and soon we were all round a roaring fire, and Jack, revived with the heat and soup (got ready by Bruce's bearer, Rahim Ali, who had arrived with the mules hours before by the regular mule-road), was soon sitting up, vowing to live and die for the Gurkhas. And well they deserved all praise, for, tired as they must have been, they were running about making everything as comfortable for us as they possibly could.

The next morning the great event of the trip was to come off. Bruce started with the Gurkhas to beat the hills round a certain point at which we were to wait with the rifles; bear and all other sorts of game were looked for. After an interminable wade through soft snow and pine woods, we came

to the point we were to stay at and sat down. Not a sound broke the stillness, and I almost forgot the hunting. Fortunately I had brought out my sketching materials, and time and game were forgotten in the joy the prospect gave me. For there were hills and valleys covered with pines far down below me, black in the gloom of the shadows climbing up and up into the sunlight, and then against the hot blue sky above, where some leafless giants burnt and bare spread out their skeleton arms, I caught glimpses of far-off snowy peaks glistening in the sunlight. But the sun began to burn with its fiercest heat, and the longing for a drop to drink made me quit my place and seek for the little stream I heard rippling far below. By this time Jack and Zurbriggen had gone off to look for Bruce and the Gurkhas, no sign or sound of whom we had heard since we parted in the morning, and as for the bears and other beasts, they were all dead or gone, or there had been none. I had a coolie with me carrying my traps, but asking him for information in my best Hindustani as to their whereabouts, received only his constant answer of "*Atcha, Sahib*," which is equivalent to "Very well, sir," and threw

no new light on the situation. But firing a shot from the rifle brought a cheery cry from Jack and Zurbriggen, who were near at hand. We packed up and made our way back to the bangla, to find that Bruce and four Gurkhas had returned to Abbottabad, so we settled down to a lively evening with the remaining men. Two goats had been purchased and presented to them by Jack as a slight return for



their services the day before, and of course we must see them killed in true Gurkha fashion —*i.e.*, beheaded with a kookri at one cut. The man deputed to show off took his stand beside the beast, facing the same way, while another held the animal's head level. Taking a good aim, the swing of his arm brought the knife down through the neck and past.

the front of the body, and the goat's head was left in the hands of the man who held it. The penalty for missing the stroke, or not cutting the neck through at one cut, is for the next man to finish it and rub the bleeding head over the face or whatever part he can get at of the one who fails; but fortunately the executioner was a practised hand. The body and head were then thrown on the bonfire, just as they were and without any dressing.

The whole scene was wild and savage in the extreme, for our great blazing fire of pine logs lighted up the figures of these wild devils as they shouted and sang, their long shadows ran out monstrously on the snow slopes, and the black night above and below us was cut into as by swords of silver where the pine trunks caught the fire's light. After this savage feed, we all gathered into the sleeping hut of the boys, which was a rudely built shed of timbers placed angle-wise on the ground, with the triangular ends boarded up. Here a regular Gurkha smoking concert was started, and one sang while another danced with his head in the low angle of the roof, and all sat round crouched under the sloping timbers, clapping

their hands in time and yelling with laughter at some more suggestive posturing than

another on the part of the dancer which tickled their fancy. I am afraid the song,

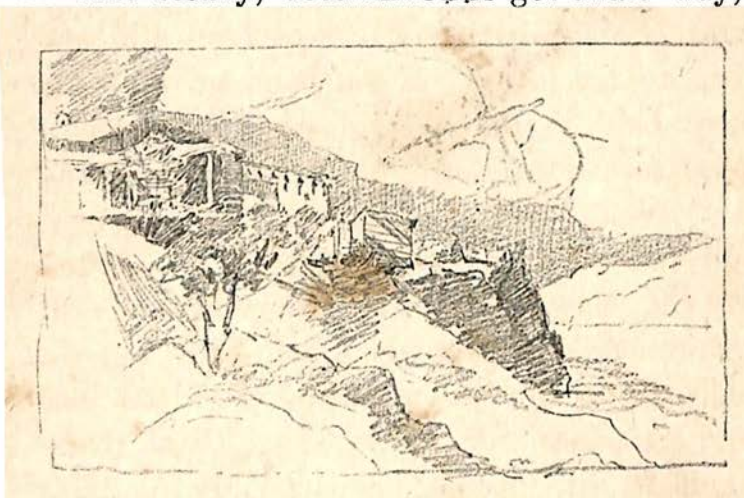
if we could have understood the words, would have been unfit for publication, and the singing was absolutely tuneless, being only a long monotonous chant which the regular hand-clapping made in some way harmonious. But this did not last long, for we were all dead beat, and soon turned in.

I had noticed in the grey of the morning how beautiful were the silver tones of the snow-covered mountains far off and near, and so I determined to make an early start and sketch. But I had not counted on the morning cold, and before I began I found the water frozen in my cup, and my brush an icicle. I had to send my coolie for a lot of newspapers I had seen lying in a corner of the bangla, and thus managed to keep up heat enough to finish my sketch. This was my first experience of some of the difficulties I might expect when I got into the snows and ice of the Karakorams. While I had been out, active hands had packed up and loaded the mules, so that when I came in all were ready to start back to Abbottabad. Nine Gurkhas, seven mules and seven coolies, and Bruce's bearer, formed the native contingent of our party, while Jack and I with Zurbriggen formed the European, and we felt mighty

big with such a retinue, for the going down was very much easier than coming up, and left us breath to consider our importance. We were all happy, and the Gurkhas especially so, for in the enjoyment of it at the half-way bangla they began beheading the fowls in the yard, to the despair of the *khansamah* in charge. We paid the damage and left the boys to their cooking and went on, knowing that they would soon catch us

up. It turned out one of the hottest days we had experienced, and we wished ourselves up at the snow again. Jack had a slight touch of the sun, so we placed him on one of the mules, while Zurbriggen and I, with six Gurkhas, started off under the leadership of Parbir, to find a short cut home. The young devil led us into a native town, right down through the bazaar. The natives flew hither and thither, as if an enemy had come

amongst them, and indeed it looked like it; for with their sticks they knocked everything over, ran after every girl they saw, and tried to cut the heads off the fowls and birds in the street. But soon we reached the long, dust-covered, white-hot roads, and, beginning to feel the effects of the heat, we settled down in that steady, determined-to-get-there way,



when each goes at his own pace, caring not whether his companion is behind or in front, which one sees after a long day's tramp.

At last we came to the long, tree-shaded road into the village, and back to comfort, bath, and beer. But it was the Holi festival of the Hindus, and all the boys were making a night of it. Guns firing, tom-toms beating, and jackals yowling, might have prevented

some from sleeping, but the day and the usual exertions overcame such obstacles and we snored most peacefully.

I had several trips in and about Abbottabad with Bruce and the Gurkhas, sleeping in the open under the stars. We had then many midnight feasts of slaughtered sheep, each man toasting his own chop around the camp fires, while Gurkhas told their stories, and Bruce translated. Each hour of our stay here had its duties, and each duty was a pleasure and a training for what lay before us. We did rock climbing under Zurbriggen, hill climbing with the Gurkhas, and I sketched always, though the English landscape still held me in its mannerism, and I was not yet able to put on paper anything of the size and grandeur of the scenery. But living amongst the people, one soon caught their characteristics, and the little differences that separated one caste and religion from another.

Jack was the first to be off north, for he and Colonel Dicken had arranged for a week's shooting in the Lolab valley; so on the night of March 17th, by the light of lanterns held by ghost like attendants, he got his long legs

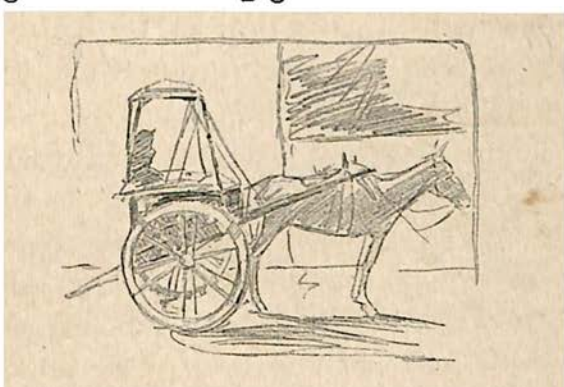
packed in the cage-like arrangement of a vehicle called an *ekka*, and started with all our good wishes for his hunting.

A farewell dinner by the officers of the garrison," an early morning with Colonel Gaselee and his Gurkhas, to see them work in the hills company firing, a few days more of sketching and packing, and we also were off to our wanderings in a new world, amongst a new people.

March 28th was the day on which we had all preparations completed for our start to the higher regions. It was picturesque to watch the loading of the regimental transport mules with provisions and kit for the countries where no house would shelter us, and no stores provide us with food. A detachment of Gurkhas was told off to guard the baggage, which was loaded up in Bruce's compound with all the attendant excitement of the Oriental. Then came the farewell and good wishes of our kind hosts. The carriage of ourselves was to be by the native hansom of the country. How shall I describe it? Look, then, at this sketch of it.

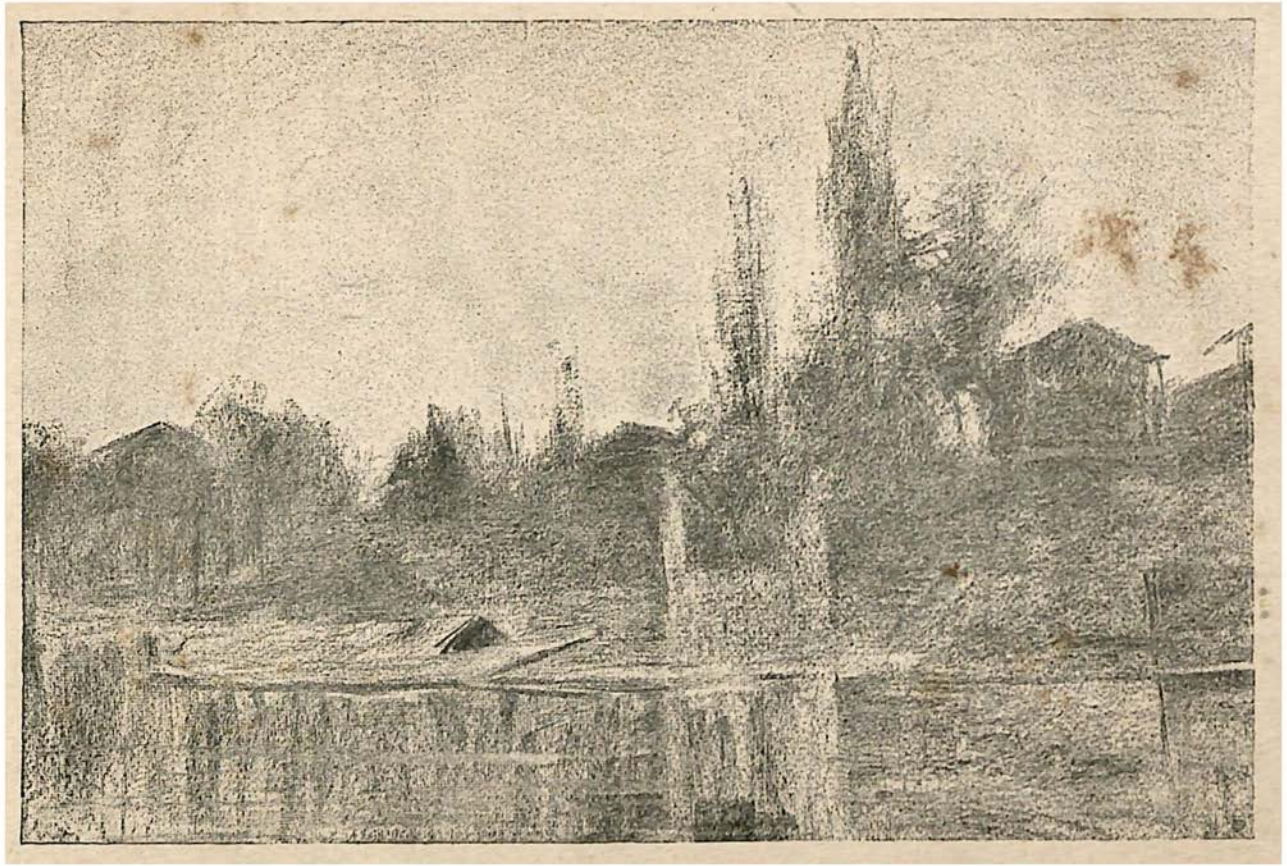
Nothing more uncomfortable or insecure could be imagined by the most ingenious inventor, for it is only to be described as a

parrot cage mounted on a coster's barrow with gig wheels, with everything tied with rotten string, from the harness on the horse's back to the hoop and hub of the wheels. Uncomfortable is not the word, it is absolute misery to any one, not a native, compelled to use such a conveyance, and we had four days of it in front of us. The first evening, through the exceeding great number of break-

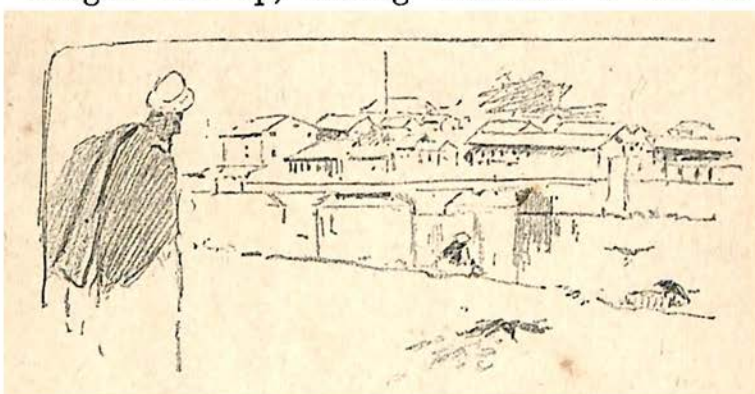


downs and the ignorance of my driver, I arrived three hours after the others, but in time to make a sketch of a most curious lovely sunset effect caused by a sandstorm driven up from the plains. Our next day's drive carried us up and over a spur of the mountains, by a road zig-zagging through wonderful pine forests, from the top of which we had glorious views of wooded valley and snow-clad peaks, down to Gahari Habibulla, from

which the rest of the day's march had to be continued on foot. Coolies were ready and waiting, and when all the baggage was transferred to their broad backs, we started off for our first march. Mounting the crest of the hills that surround the valley of Domel, we had one lovely view of the meeting of the Jhelam and Kishanganga, with their thin winter flow of silver veining the grey-blue face of the summer torrent's bed, and then down through barren, water-worn gullies of conglomerite, across a good English-made suspension bridge to the Dak Bangla of Domel, and we had entered Kashmir. I had heard and read of the beauties of the land, so when next morning's sun broke in upon me, bright visions rose before my eyes of colour and beauty, an artist's Paradise. But my enjoyment was disturbed by the prosaic realities of lazy drivers, on whom any amount of good sound English seemed to have no effect. Even with the aid of a stick, we did not get started till half-past ten, and the sun had begun to burn out all other thoughts but those of keeping cool. My driver had got lost, in some argument with the toll collector at the bridge, to all memory of sahibs and ekkas, so taking the beast in charge myself,



I started off without him. This ekka was something new; the row the Indian "shandrydan" made was not enough for the Kashmiri, but he must let in six sets of cymbals round his coster-barrow arrangement, and the noise was infernal. I did not know what made it for some time, and thought I had got hold of a tinker's machine. The owner caught me up, having obtained a lift in



another driver's vehicle, and he got what he expected.

Our road, cut along the slope of the hills that bounded the valley of the Jhelam, led us into new scenery, where the colour of the earth and the hill-sides, a reddish purple, and the magnificent greens of the foliage, broken here and there by a blaze of orange and purple blossom, made a scheme of colour which continually changed with every wind

in the valley. And away up in the hot grey sky rose the silver crest of some snowy peak.

Stopping the night at Chakoti, we started off early in the cool of the morning, determined to get to the boats at Barramula and the calm and peace of the river that evening, for of noise and dust we had had enough. The day was enlivened by the overturning of Zurbriggen's ekka, fortunately without any serious damage, and by Rahim Ali's manner of purchasing fowls and other articles of food from the *Bunia* at Rampur. He did business by smacking his face and giving him the price he thought enough, the *Bunia* taking the money and the smacking, and seeming more hurt at losing the bargaining than at the beating.

After leaving here we entered the vale of Kashmir, where nature in all her loveliness opened the doors of the "Garden of the World," and after the everlasting jolting of the most infernal ekka, our tired senses were refreshed with beauty undreamed of or imagined. I have but a hazy recollection of the arrival at Barramula, where our road journey ended, and we took boat; but impressionist sketches of flying draperies and

grey roads, tall poplars and still water, liquid

and refreshing in the grey of evening, float

through my brain, and with them a discord of voices clamouring for the sahib to take "My boat," "My boat best, Sahib," "See my chits," "All big sahibs take my boat, Sahib," till one voice above the rest shouts, "Bruce Sahib always take my boat," decided us to take him and his brother. We had the two boats moored higher up the river, away from the chatter of boatmen and their wives and children, and the everlasting squabbling, in order to get a quiet night's sleep.

The change from the last four days' bone-shaking to gliding along the still water between the low grey banks was something indescribable. The vale extended in almost unbroken flatness to the foot of the mountains, which rose up on either hand into the clear morning sky. Sitting in the front of the boat, under the grass mat awning, we had the boatman and his daughter towing upon the bank for life in the foreground, with sometimes a village of picturesque houses, beautifully dilapidated and drunken looking, and very etchable, until a broad expanse of water opened and my figures got on board and took to their heart-shaped paddles. Then we entered on the calm solitude of the Wulah lake, in which the grey

mountains with their snowy crests were reflected shimmering below us. As the evening fell, the hills got deeper shaded in misty blue, while the snow which covered their ridges reflected the sky above, till they were almost indistinguishable, except for the pinnacles of rock that spot their surface. Then night. Another day of peace, broken into by one of the sudden squalls that often sweep the surface of the lake, which almost upset our boat. We were saved from that, however, by the roof giving way with all it contained, including the old grandmother's spinning-wheel, for which she howled; but all was soon put right again, and we glided gaily up to Srinagar; through scenery glorified with the glory of a sunset I had never seen the like of before.

We were too late to go through the town that night, so we tied up outside and I went ashore in the moonlight, and saw a fairy city in the distance, with spires of silver piercing the dark, and the sound of many voices chanting in low monotonous chant. The witchery of all I had seen had got hold of me, and beauty was everywhere.

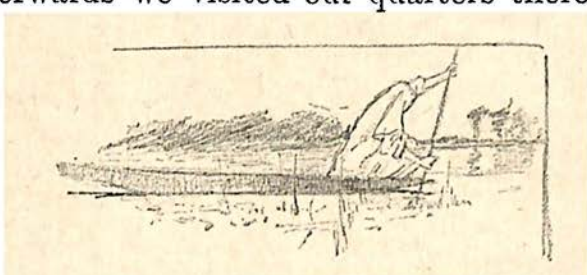
An early start brought us into the centre of the town before we awoke. It was dirty,

but it was indeed lovely, there were subjects without end for etcher and painter. Colour, light, form and figures, sparkling water, quaint bridges, houses tumbling into attitudes expressly for sketching, and all beautiful. But the people! I was first awakened by a banker in snowy turban and lemon coloured muslin robes, squatted by my side with enormous ledgers. Well, thought I, in the misty uncertainty of half asleep, my account is going to be added up, and the

heavenly, or rather, as I looked at his burnt face, the other place's clerk is here to do it. But it was only the head of a native banking firm wanting to provide me with gold and silver untold. Thinks I, young man, if you were where I came from, you would not have many refusals to your request. At any rate I had to get up and try and kick him to get rid of him, for my answer, "that I was made of gold," to his "I will lend you one thousand rupees, I will lend you two thousand rupees, I will lend you *ten* thousand

rupees," had no effect. Eventually I tumbled him over the gunwale of the boat, and as he disappeared between the matting and the side I expected to hear a splash, but he had his boat waiting for him, and soon appeared again with many others at the end of our craft. Rahim Ali then handed me a stick about as thick as my arm, the weight of which would have stunned an ox, and told me they were all a "bad lot," and to give it them. We managed to keep them off and went on accompanied by all the bankers and merchants of the town, each with his boat loaded with his wares of silver and copper, carved wood, papier-maché, shawls, &c., and shouting to us, "My shop the best shop," "All my shop is yours, sahib," "You come see my shop, you not go another shop if you see my shop," and so on. As one boatman tried to get in front of another, and all struggled to get at us, I thought surely some of them will be upset, but we arrived safely in the Chinar Bagh, where others awaited us with their wares spread out on the grass for our inspection and acceptance. But the sight of Jack to meet us and give us welcome was too great a pleasure to be rudely drowned in the clamour of such a mob,

so we cleared them off. Jack had acquired the habits of an old traveller in Srinagar, and seemed quite *blasé*. His small, luxuriously cushioned kishti was a treat to see, with seven white-turbaned and brawny chested boatmen to paddle him. Conway and I entered it with him and went off to give our salaams to the Assistant Resident, Captain Trench, while Colonel Dicken, walking along the bank of the Munshi Bagh, waved greetings. Afterwards we visited our quarters there and



paid a visit to Samad Shah, shawl merchant and banker, who turned out to be the gentleman I had so unceremoniously tumbled out of my boat that morning. He gave us tea while his staff of white-robed assistants displayed his wares, a feast of colour, and out of the rush-curtained windows we could see the beautiful temple of Shah Hamadan, and the *Ghats*, alive with natives washing and bathing, and the ever-moving panorama of the river.

We returned to Munshi Bagh to dinner, and afterwards I went for a walk with Conway and Jack to see the temple of Pandrethan by moonlight. It is beautifully situated in the centre of what has been a lake surrounded by a grove of trees.

We enjoyed the beauty of Srinagar for a

week, and while waiting for the mule train with our baggage we visited the temple of Takht-I-Suliman, situated on the top of a small hill. From this height one has the whole misty vale spread out with the winding Jhelam tracing beautiful curves, which are said to have suggested the well-known Kash-

mir shawl pattern. We could see the Dal Lake with its groves and floating islands, which we afterwards visited, revelling in the pleasure gardens of dead emperors.

At last all was ready for the serious work of the expedition. Our party was now complete, Bruce having joined us on the 11th of April, and we were to leave all traces of civilisation behind us, and be swallowed up in the mountains for months to come.

CHAPTER III.

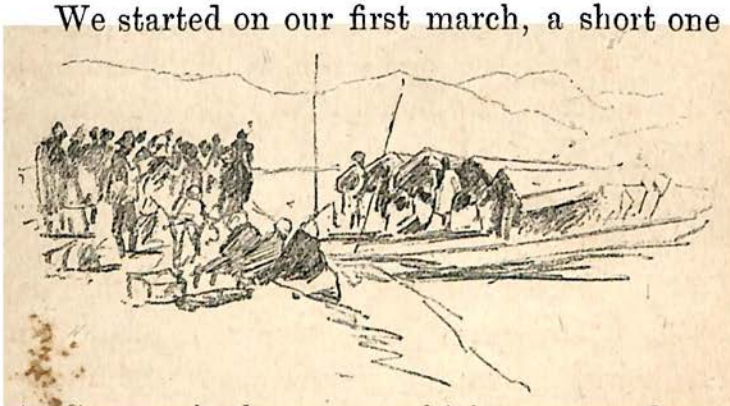
THE ROAD TO GILGIT.

UNDERNEATH the shadow of the chinars that overhung the bank of the Munshi Bagh our boats lay gently rolling with the motion of the figures in grey garments, who passed to and fro with bundles of bedding. Outside of us the river was like a sheet of silver in the moonlight. When all was ready, salaams were waved and spoken and the dark boats shot out into the silence of the solemn and ghostly night. Tall poplars, like giant sentinels, lined the banks, and not till the grey, dim, fairylike city appeared, was the stillness broken. After that songs were sung

and healths exchanged, and the grey walls and silver minarets of Srinagar echoed and re-echoed with songs unheard before, which to some of us were like a desecration of such a lovely scene.

Next day we arrived at Bandipur, where the baggage was unshipped, and the kiltas in which most of it was packed were hoisted on the backs of the coolies who awaited us.

We started on our first march, a short one



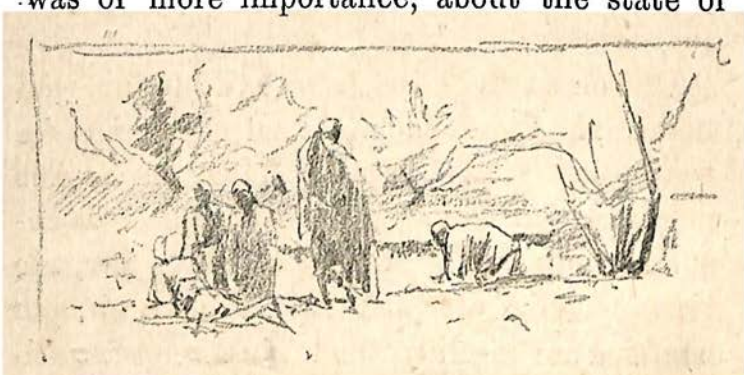
to Sanarwain, by a way which rose gently to the valley at the foot of the mountains, up which ran a steep zig-zag path. Here our first camp was pitched. Dark clouds were rapidly rising out of the hidden valleys behind, and soon the tops of the mountains around us were lost in their fleecy folds; while thunder, accompanied by brilliant flashes of lightning, boomed angrily through the dark valleys, which the red fires of the setting sun,

thrown up through the gorge from across the water, only dimly lighted.

Conway and the rest, not having yet tried the security of their "Whymper" tents, took shelter in an old, dust-littered shelter-house, but Jack and I, conscious of a strong Cabul tent over us, remained and watched the hills and valleys blotted out, and when the rain was upon us we lay and listened to the downpour. The storm, which was heavy, passed away during the night, and a bright morning saw us on our way upwards to the Rajdiangan Pass. Most of us made straight up the mountain by the old track, but the coolies and servants kept to the well-made mule-road. As we climbed higher and higher, the view opened, and its beauty well repaid our troublesome march. Sometimes I saw beautiful bits of colour, such as trees in blossom, against the deep blue sky, and then came a dark grove of pines sunk in the shadow of the high hills with the heads of flowers seen against the dark purple of its depths.

We had a very stiff bit of climbing to get to the top, after which our camping-ground, the Tragbal, was soon reached. It was situated in the centre of a pine forest with patches of winter snow still here and there.

in the hollows. While resting and watching the noisy bustle of our hundred coolies, Gurkhas, and servants, pitching camp, Mr. Lenard and Mr. Mitchell came in on their way down from Gilgit, and gave us stirring accounts of the fighting in Hunza three months before, and told us of the Pamirs being closed on account of the presence of Russian and Chinese. They also gave us news, which was of more importance, about the state of



the roads, which were covered deep with snow on the passes, and in many places broken away by avalanches, over which it was very dangerous to cross. One of their men slipped and shot down into the torrent and was lost. So extra care was given to boots, and the warmest of our clothing was got ready for crossing the bleakest and worst of the passes on the morrow. Then I did some sketching.

A still mountain pond gave an extra picturesqueness to the dim avenues of great pine-trees that surrounded our camp, so I had not far to look for a good subject. Rapid sketching, I found, was the only way to catch hold of the effects, and I made a careful study of the details of the scene to add to it if required; but in all cases I tried to get effect and drawing down at once, as that was the only way to retain any of the spirit and go of the scene.

Of course we must have a camp-fire that night, so the men were all sent out for wood, and soon a roaring flame lit up the depths of the dark wood, and clouds of bright smoke burst and trailed through the tree tops, while all the men sat or stood around, wrapped up in their thick putta clothes and blankets. An old boy with grey beard and turbaned head started up a would-be lively song, and all joined in the chorus, or kept time by clapping their hands. The song was dismal in the extreme, but it had a weird effect.

We were up at four o'clock to get all the benefit of the frozen snow surface, and an hour after leaving camp we were on it, in a bleak and cold wind that seemed to nip

bits of flesh off our exposed faces as with a pair of pincers, and made us shelter behind every rock or mound we came to. Sometimes the shelter was so low that we had to lie flat on our stomachs to get the benefit of it. I saw very little of my companions, but as the snow got softer I could see the tracks made by those in front, and so knew the direction to take. The hard surface we had depended upon soon became too thin, and, plunging in frequently up to the waist, we made very slow progress, for often one's legs got fixed down below, so that it was a job to get them out. Several hours of this sort of travelling did not give me much opportunity of observing the scenery, and with dimmed snow-glasses it was impossible, even if one wanted to. After the worst part was over, I came upon Colonel Dicken with his comical servant, Jumma Khan.

The Colonel asked me to stop, saying that as soon as his kilta came along he would have tea made. We sat under some silver birches, which made a beautiful scheme of colour with the grey snow, for at this season the old bark was stripped off and the silver under-bark exposed. While resting, two natives took turns at our legs, massaging them

in a manner, known only to themselves, which put quite a new life into us. I often noticed them doing this to each other; it may account for the way in which they get through such long marches with heavy loads. At any rate I felt quite a new man after they had done with me, and fit for many hours' more work.

The tea was quite a success, a small fire being made with dry twigs, and then I went

on again. A steep, birch-covered slope descended from where we were sitting down to the pines on the road about 2,000 feet below, so I determined to glissade and thus save about two miles round. Jumping from the road down to a place I thought would be nice to start from, I went in over my head in a snow-drift. After struggling and getting perpendicular again I shot off, not on my feet,

but it was a ticklish piece of work to watch and not to strike a tree. This means of travelling quickly got me past the snow line, and then the melted slush and mud made matters very unpleasant. I was soon on the road in the valley where the burning sun had me at its mercy. To get rid of winter clothing at once and into something more suitable for the change of temperature was the first work, and a coolie or two had additions to their loads.

Kanzalwan was the camping ground we wished to reach, and a weary way it seemed to a sweat and dust-covered man. It was like a tumbler of iced champagne merely to see the Kishanganga, icy cold and most delicious to bathe in, splashing over the rocks; and forgetting all warnings, I had a bath, fortunately without worse results than an awful headache.

The march next day along the Gurais Valley to Gurais, our camping ground, gave us a good idea of the best and worst of the road. Avalanches of snow and rock from the mountains above covered it in many places straight down to the river bed, so that traversing it was a work of caution, and ice-axes were very useful to make steps with. A slip

would have sent us into the torrent. After passing these the road brought us to a lovely timbered opening of the valley, which looked beautiful in the early morning sunlight, the long shadows trailing across the path and over the fallen timber and up the mountain sides. We camped under the native fort, built in years past against their raiding enemies from the north. The valley and village looked very prosperous, and were well watered by the

river and streams from hidden glaciers above. There were many interesting and beautiful subjects for sketching, for the fort, grey and square with strong-built towers at either corner, was on the top of a knoll in the vale, with dark pines climbing up the snow-topped hills behind. The willows on the marshy bank of the river had a background, not of sky and distance as in England, but of sun-litten, yellow-coloured rock faces.

The next two days, with much the same

scenery, and a gradually ascending road, brought us to Burzil camp at the foot of the Burzil Pass. After we had entered the Burzil valley black masses of cloud gradually gathered and threatened heavy snow. This is the most difficult and dangerous pass on the road to Gilgit, and Mitchell and Lenard had told us at the Tragbal that there were forty feet of snow on it, and that it would be very dangerous to be caught on it in a storm. Our party was a very large one to attempt it, numbering 105 persons, so that

it was very disappointing to us to see such weather now. The old Lambadhar of Mapnun, the last village at which we camped, said it was possible to get over on a clear morning, and that we should not have long to wait; but there was no more accommodation for such a large party to stay there any time than a long, low hut, built of loose stones for the use of the *dak wallahs*, and only capable of accommodating about thirty closely packed. In it when we arrived were a lot of Pathans, most murderous-looking ruffians, who refused to quit, and the weather seemed too awful to compel any creature to sleep outside. But the question of shelter for the

coolies demanded immediate attention. The snow was now falling heavily and steadily; it was pitiful to see them huddled in groups under shelter of any rag they could support on sticks over a little fire made from some low shrub that grew near. The heavy snow which had covered everything in a white shroud left nothing to be seen but grey desolation, with these dark knots of figures over their little fires, the smoke and snow-flakes swirling about them.

Jack's tent, in which he and I lived, was the largest, capable of sleeping four comfortably. We cleared everything out of it, for the natives were odorous, and allowed all who could get in to enter, and all without tent or hut shelter, about thirty-five, I think, crowded in. It was a treat to see their smiles and salaams, and to note the way they packed themselves, sitting on their heels. But we knew they were all right now, and Jack and I were provided with room in the other tents, for Zurbriggen and Bruce had left us at Gurais to cross the Kumri Pass to get some bear-shooting and were to join us at Astor.

The snow kept steadily falling, but during the afternoon I managed to get some sketches of the groups of figures dotted over the snow,

and a snow-storm effect. We were snowed up here for the next two days. After the first night, as the weather seemed hopeless, it was decided to send back to the village of Minimurg eighty-five of the coolies, and to bring them back when there seemed a prospect of getting on. The Pathans caused a lot of

trouble, but when it cleared up a little the Gurkhas settled it by turning them out and sending them off, for it was too much of a nuisance to have to be on the alert all the time with such thieves near us. The situation looked very bad, for every change which at first promised better weather only disclosed banks of dark cloud, with an advance of

smoky mist silently moving up, blotting out peak and hill and valley till it was upon us white and ghostlike.

The second morning opened bright and clear, and some coolies with luggage of Colonel Durand's on their way down, having watched and started at two a.m., cleared the pass before the snow came on again, as it did in the afternoon. We were very much annoyed that we had not sent for our men and crossed that morning, as the worst would have been over before the weather broke, even if we had started late. Each of us employed our time during this fine spell in our own way, Conway trying his instruments and taking observations, Jack starting a snow bust of Conway, while I had a very good day's sketching of the snow-covered valley.

Our tents were now in a very bad state with the damp of the melted snow, but discomfort such as this only gave the local colour to our woes. During the course of the third day the Pathans came back and tried to make more trouble, so the Gurkhas set to in earnest, and soon scattered them. They found shelter in some rocks on the other side of the valley. We could see their fires in the dusk of the evening across the grey snow slopes, and took

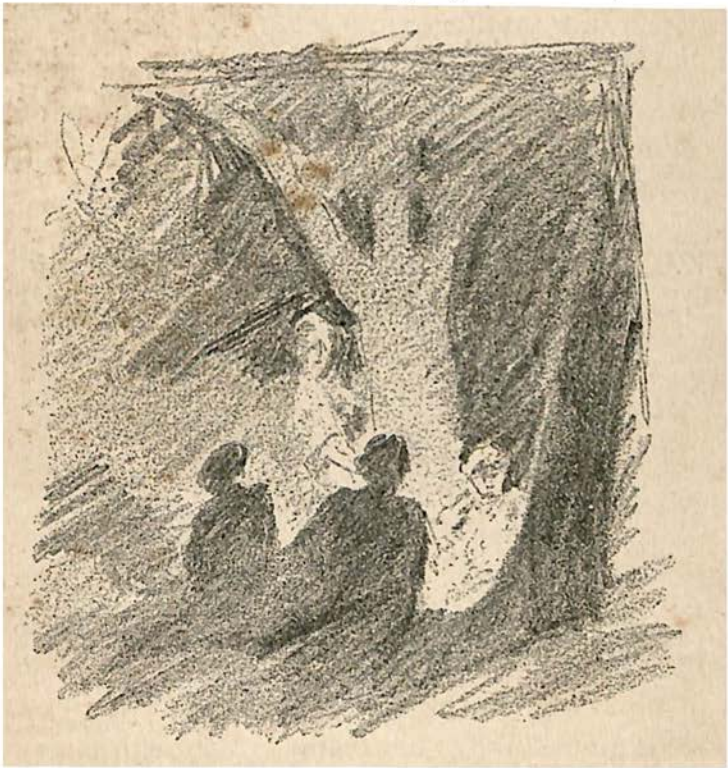
every precaution against an invasion during the night, having been warned of their thieving propensities, and treachery; so revolvers were seen to and a Gurkha guard put in Conway's tent, while he shared the tent with Jack and me.

On the morning of the fifth day, against all expectations, the lambadhar brought the coolies back from Minimurg, and surprised us

by getting their loads ready for crossing the pass. The morning did not look at all promising, but if they were prepared to go we were quite willing to attempt it, though heavy masses of cloud still hung low over the peaks above the pass. We had breakfast in the smoky atmosphere of the wet hut, sitting crouched up on bundles of stores. Jack mistook a sleeping coolie for one, and was un-

ceremoniously upset by the man awakening through the unusual weight.

After a lot of trouble we got our long line of men on the march upwards. The newly fallen snow was soft and very insecure, and



we could see that a hard day was before us. After an ascent of five hundred feet, silently a deathlike shroud of snow enveloped us. Nothing but the figures of the slow-moving, silent coolies near us broke the grey blank.

Suddenly we were all together, the guide and the men having stopped, and a long wailing cry to "Allah" rose from the now thoroughly frightened coolies. Conway decided it was as dangerous to turn back as go on. So with the guide and a compass he took the lead, Jack and I to guard the rear and keep up those who would fall behind, while the others attended along the line. The hardened tracks formed by the men in front made it much

easier for those coming after, but Jack and I had not much benefit of it. Some coolie, more frightened than another, would lie down on the line and stop the rest, so we often had to plunge alongside through the unbroken snow up to our waists. It was very difficult to get now one, and then another out of their indifference to death, for in all cases they replied it was "Kismet," and "as easy to die there as at the top." One young fellow

was completely done up, and cried, grovelling in the snow at our feet, to be let return, and his father taking up his load, and putting it on his own back, added his entreaties. With such a well marked track, which would take the falling snow some time to fill up, we knew, if he made a rush for it, being unloaded, he would reach the hut. Permission being given, after kissing both of our clothes and boots, he disappeared into the mist behind, and we saw or heard of him no more; whether he reached safety or not I cannot tell. I hope so, for his father was one of the best in the crowd, and gave the least trouble of any with a double load.

The mutinous conduct of so many men throwing down their burdens and refusing to move, made our progress very slow, and to save their lives and our baggage much persuasion was required. Snow blindness began to make itself felt among many, especially those without glasses; their primitive precautions of soot-blackened eyes and fringes of rag being insufficient to protect them. One of the Gurkhas suffered very much until we lent him a pair of our glasses.

The incidents of the march were many. One of them was the fainting of Rahim Ali,

but we managed to support him along to the top of the pass, when the sun broke out through the drifting clouds, and gave us hope and courage for the remainder of the journey, though it displayed the snow-fields white and gleaming, and made its dazzle felt even through our dark glasses.

A long journey was still before us, and with no refreshment except half a hard-boiled egg,

which the Colonel shared with me, we began our long descent to the Chelong hut. We went on and on over hard snow, sometimes plunging into soft, snow-covered gullies up to the waist; but the bright sun and clear avenue of the valley made these incidents of the way of little moment. It was dark when we reached the hut, and snow had begun to

fall again, so we pitched our two tents on its roof, while the Colonel had a place cleared in the dark for his, which turned out, in the morning, to be on the rubbish hole of the place.

We were all in a wretched state the next morning, but many of the coolies were very

bad indeed, and cocaine was freely administered to allay the pain of their burning eyes. Our faces were swollen with blisters. Mine, I think, was the worst.

Our road lay now through a long, desolate valley, its bleakness emphasised by great patches of snow. Soft slush made it heavy

for marching, but our men bore up bravely, being promised sheep that evening as backsheesh. Lela Ram, one of the Gurkhas, had to be led by the hand, his eyes giving out completely, but he recovered the next day; four of the coolies were in the same plight, and one had to be left at the first village on our way, with frostbite in his foot. We camped that night at Kurrim, where the men feasted and made merry on the sheep Conway gave them.

The next morning rain was falling when we left at six o'clock. We were now in the land of mighty landscapes and mountains, towering away aloft with their grey crowns of misty cloud, thrown back and up by the rocky foreground. At Mikiel, where we camped that evening, I had my first sight of a glacier high up in the valley between some cloud-hidden peaks. It made a very fine picture, and gave just the bit of light to a fine dark subject, with the trees in the foreground gloom of the valley.

Three hundred yards after we left Mikiel on our way to Astor, the entrance to the valley through which we had to pass gave me a view of the glorious scenery we were to live amongst. But farther on, after we had crossed

the bridge, at the entrance to the Astor Valley, I learned what the grandeur of the mountains really meant. We were in the bottom of a narrow valley, in which great grey rock cliffs rose high up on either hand, and disappeared in the mist at the end of the gorge, across which the clouds trailed, when some one shouted "Look up, Mac," and away in the heavens above I saw three great ice peaks, like towers of polished silver, which the passing cloud shadows dimmed and brightened as when one breathes on bright metal. The colours that played in the depths of this blaze of light can never be imagined nor described. I gazed spellbound. I never saw anything which had such an effect on me in all our journey as this. I had eyes for no other scenery that day, for I had seen heaven, and the great white throne.

We arrived at the camping ground of Astor, and found two tents pitched, and thought we should meet some of the Gilgit men, but they were empty. Jack and I threw ourselves down under the shadow of the tents, to wait for the baggage. We were informed that the Rajah was about to visit us, and coming through the trees we saw a stately, turbaned old gentleman, with enormous moustaches,

and a gaudily attired young one, who turned out to be his son. They were accompanied by a numerous retinue of coarsely dressed followers, wearing the dard cap of the country. They welcomed us with great heartiness, and offered us a dish of nuts and dried fruit, with a few eggs. We suggested to the young

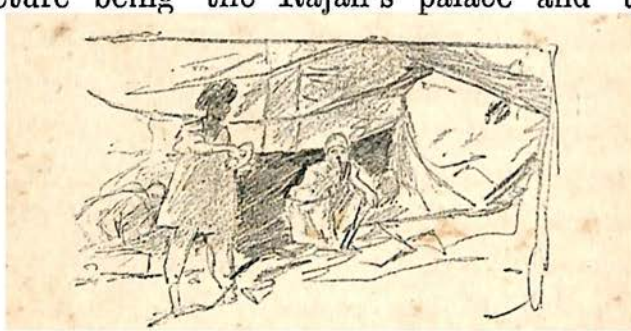
Rajah that we should like the eggs cooked, so he took the dish away, and brought them back with Kashmir tea and great *chapattis* in addition, and sat with his ragged court around him, watching us eat.

The evening was spent in celebrating with a bowl of milk punch and songs, and general hilarity, Jack's coming of age the day before.

Next morning Jack's *Shikari*, who had been with other sahibs in the *nalas* on this road before, thought he could get some shooting for him. So they arranged to meet us at Bunji. It was raining hard, and kept the rest of us indoors till after tiffin, when we went to pay a visit to the town of Astor, about a mile from the camp. The first view of it from the opposite side of a deep *nala* was very striking. It is situated on the end of an old moraine. Its flat roofs of timber-built mud-plastered houses rise in low tiers up the slope, with tall poplars growing from amongst them, and, commanding the road, there is a picturesque fort, the walls of which continue upwards the sides of the deep precipice on which it is built. The path led down to the bottom of the *nala*, across the rock-strewn bed of a mountain torrent, and up a steep zig-zag crumbling path to the fort, where the guard of half a dozen Kashmir Sepoys presented arms. We visited what they call the bazaar, a few low houses, dark and windowless, with raised floors, on which the sellers sit, and some shelves behind with a few pieces of cloth. One could catch a glimpse of the dark inner sanctum or sleeping place. No things of any interest were to be

seen, but we purchased some Patta blankets for the servants. The streets are dirty and so narrow that one can touch the opposite walls of any of them, and the roofs too, with both hands. There are no vehicles of any kind in the country, everything being carried on the people's backs.

All the villages are of the same character, the only buildings with any pretence to architecture being the Rajah's palace and the



mosque, where they have one, and, of more importance than all, the fort. We visited the fort here, escorted by the population, and the guard turned out once more. The officer escorted us over it, but the only use for it that I could see, was to look at the magnificent view up and down the valley, for the fort itself seemed as if it could not support a cow leaning against it. One could fill sketch-books all day long with the life and costumes of the people, who seemed to take

a great interest in our work, and willingly did all they could to give us information. The women, of course, were nearly always out of sight, but we caught glimpses of some now and again, and dirty and ugly they were.

The Rajah had arranged a Tamasha for us on the second day, being the last of the Ramadan, and a polo match, with a band of tom-toms, drums, and *suranai* pipes, was played.

There was not much ceremony about the court, every one treated the old boy more like a father of his people than a king, crowding round him, as he had the best place, to get a glimpse of the match, in which every one who had anything of the horse kind joined, from the prince to the peasant. The Rajah was dressed in a red cloak, and a sort of white shirt, with the shirt tails outside a pair of green trousers, a grey-blue turban, and the usual Oriental slippers with turned-up toes. With his great moustaches standing out beyond either cheek he looked the typical Rajah of Indian romance.

After several games had been played, he asked if it was our pleasure to see any more polo, or would we like to see a nautch. Visions of sylph-like creatures floating about

in poetic abandon passed through our brain, so we said that of polo we thought we had had enough. He commanded the nautch to commence, but no beautiful creatures appeared at his command. The infernal band shrieked and tom-tommed, and some one pitched a gaudily dressed youngster into the ring, who began posturing and skipping round to the music. His place was afterwards taken by an old man, evidently of great popularity from the applause he received. We soon had enough of that too.

The Rajah came to see us off next morning, and took leave of us with many expressions of good-will. The coolies he supplied were a very poor lot, more ragged and ill-fed looking than the Gurais and Kashmiris who had carried for us so far. We were accompanied through the town of Astor by the Tehsildar and his retinue of ragged admirers, to which was added the Soubardar in charge of the guard at the fort. We were glad to be quit of their attentions and questions when they left, after accompanying us a mile beyond the town. The road was down hill a good half of the way, but we had a steep climb at the end, over stones and rocks, to Dashkin.

We had a more interesting march next day

through an edible pine forest, recently devastated by rock and mud avalanches, where I saw great pines torn and twisted like match wood. At the side of one of these avalanches, splashed with mud which was now white and dry, a little violet grew all alone, and in a moment I was back amongst the green fields and hedgerows of England. I carefully gathered it, and pressing it gently in the botany press passed on silently through the desolation. We camped at Doian underneath its old fort, where we found Appleford and the Doctor in charge of this section of the road, and exchanged news.

We had choice of two roads for our march next day; the old road over the Hatu Pîr, a climb of 6,000 feet, and the new road, not yet completed; the unfinished part being described as very dangerous, but much nearer. Some of our party chose the lower road, but Conway and I took the upper, on account of the view to be had from the top, and the coolies came with us. We were not disappointed, and we saw the mountains under another aspect. A great broad valley, 6,000 feet beneath, spread out below us with the Indus winding through it like a small rivulet. There was not a vestige of green or life of any

sort, it was all bare rolling desert, a waste of rock and sand; but away north rose the ice pinnacles of Raki Pushi, 25,000 feet high. To our left was the great gorge into Chilas, formed by the Indus, and farther still rose the buttresses of Nanga Parbat, itself unseen. Behind us was the valley we had come up, bounded on our right by another range of great mountains with the great Dichel Peak, across whose face the clouds rolled in splendour.

We tore ourselves reluctantly from the scene, and prepared for our descent. All the coolies had gone on before us, 6,000 feet down a great broad fan which was very steep, and composed of loose rocks. Gravel zig-zags had been built across its face, but the whole thing was in such a shaky condition that small avalanches had destroyed these in many places. It was simply terrible on one's boots, not to mention the torture of feet and legs, and the whole place was shifting and moving so, that we expected every minute to be swept away, mangled and unrecognisable corpses, in an avalanche of rocks. Skeletons of dead ponies here and there told of the dangers of the place. When it seemed to be centuries since I started on my way down, the bottom was

as far off as ever. Sitting down I watched a pony, with a great load built up on its back, picking its way, accompanied by its owner: but sweeping low down over the path was the Gilgit telegraph wire, with a tremendous span across the gorge. This caught the top of the load, and yet the pony went on, pulling against the wire for a good distance, till it got too "taut." The driver had not seen the trouble till his animal stopped, and then getting up on top of a high rock, he grasped the wire in both hands and pushed it up. The wire, being at last released, snapped the man off his perch, and he flew through the air like another Zazel, landing, fortunately, among a lot of loose gravel instead of the great rocks that were everywhere about. I never saw anybody so surprised in my life, but beyond some scrapes and bruises he was unhurt. Conway and I had each been going down in our own way, though sometimes Conway would make a short glissade straight down, when it looked as if the whole mountain was coming after him. At last he could stand the pounding over the loosely built roads no longer, and said he was going to chance it, so off he went down what seemed pretty clear of large

stones. I saw a confused mass of dust and stones and rocks rattling and tearing down for about 2,000 feet, and watched in terror, till he waved his axe, and I knew he was all right. I thought the old road good enough for me, and continued my weary way. At last I arrived at the quarters of the Sepoys guarding the gorge. They had tea ready, and we crossed by Captain Aylmer's bridge, made of telegraph wire and timber, instead of the native rope bridge.

We camped at Ramghat, and news came from Bruce at Bungi, whither he had gone with Zurbriggen, instead of meeting us at Astor, that there was some hitch about coolies. Captain Kemball sent his horse with the messenger. So Conway rode off and left me to bring on the baggage. In the morning, on climbing up to the plateau above our camping ground, a dead sweep of broad sloping valley presented itself, a perfect desert of rotten rusty rock, a valley of desolation sloping down to the Indus, the sound of whose murmuring waters alone broke the stillness. Up in the air, swaying with open wings in great sweeps, a lammergeier sailed, the only sign of life we saw till we came near Bungi and met the Pathans and coolies working on

the new road. Most of them looked villanous cut-throats, but they returned our greeting cheerily enough. A detachment of troops was stationed at Bungi, the officers and some of the engineers of the road being encamped in a beautiful grove of mulberry, pomegranate and apricot-trees, and our tents were put up in the same place. The grove was like an emerald set in rusty iron, such a contrast the green oasis made with the surrounding desolation. All our party were united here once more. The only one of all the hunting parties to have any success was Zurbriggen, who had managed to get a good pair of markor horns the day before I arrived. Captain Kemball took Jack and me out to try our luck at the only quail in the district, at which everybody had had a shot without success. We were not more successful, though we saw it once whirr and dive into the cover, but we got some other birds to add to the collection of skins we were making. The next morning Conway arranged with me to bring on the baggage when I received a message from Gilgit, for which he, Bruce, and Zurbriggen started that day.

The sun was frightfully hot in this barren valley away from the shade of the trees.

I wanted to get a good sketch of Nanga Parbat, 26,630 feet high, whose broad face, crowned with peaks and veined with ridges of pearly snow and ice, filled the south end of the valley with tantalising beauty; but the red-hot air dried up the water colour as soon as it touched the paper. I found a stream trickling down from some hidden glacier, and soaked my drawing thoroughly, keeping my paint box in it as well all the time I painted, to prevent the colours drying, and so was able to get a fairly decent sketch before it was quite dried up.

I spent four days here, sketching and exploring. I crossed the Indus to see the old Saye fort, where Dr. Robertson, by the upsetting of a boat, lost thirteen men and all his baggage on his way to Kaffiristan. On the fourth day a message from Conway gave us our "route," and the next morning we were off over a desert of sand. After two hours we arrived at the engineers' hut, where Maynard gave us acceptable drinks of what was left by Conway and Bruce, and I think we cleared him out of supplies. We crossed the Indus by the flying bridge, a great barge-like floating structure, moored to a pulley running on a cable

stretched from bank to bank in a deep rocky gorge, the current carrying us over to the other side, the whole operation being beautifully managed by the boatman with great sweeps. It was so dark that it was difficult to find Bigstone Camp, where so many big stones were about, but at last we discovered a faint light glimmering in the distance, and soon were settled alongside Wilkinson, another of the engineers on the road, and were regaled with filtered water which he had in bottles.

Early in the morning we sent off the tents and baggage, except the Colonel's, with whom I stayed till lunch, when it began to blow a perfect storm. The valley here is very open, and the dust swept by in choking clouds, carrying away the Colonel's tent in the first burst; Wilkinson's was protected with a rampart of stones. The cup of tea which we were having was soon solid with accumulated dust, but I managed to get some more under shelter of the big stone from which the camp is named.

On starting again we had a very bad bit of road to pass over, swept by the avalanches of stones the road-makers were rolling down from above. Further on I was met by

servants with three horses, kindly sent for us by Dr. Roberts from Gilgit; so, sending one back for the Colonel, and putting Rahim Ali on the other, I mounted and slowly trotted on. I had no guide, and soon lost my way, taking what had formerly been a road. Finally my horse was brought up on his haunches at the bottom of a narrow gully, which ended in a sheer precipice of about a hundred feet. There was hardly room to turn on the narrow ledge, and it was certainly impossible to get off unless I slid down his tail, but the animal knew what he was about, and carefully picking his steps, he turned on his hind legs, and made his way up again, and down another gully so narrow and precipitous, that when a rock on which he stepped gave way with him, I had to throw my legs up over his neck to keep them from being crushed. We got to the level at last, and a canter over the dry part of the Gilgit river bed took me to the camp, which was already pitched. A quick canter next day brought us to the green fields and orchards of Gilgit, and in the Bagh near the Residency were tents ready for all of us, and our welcome was delightful.

To finish up, Jack came in, having tramped from Bigstone Camp in the one day. We

dined with the officers at the mess that evening, and gave them the news of the outer world to which they had so long been strangers.

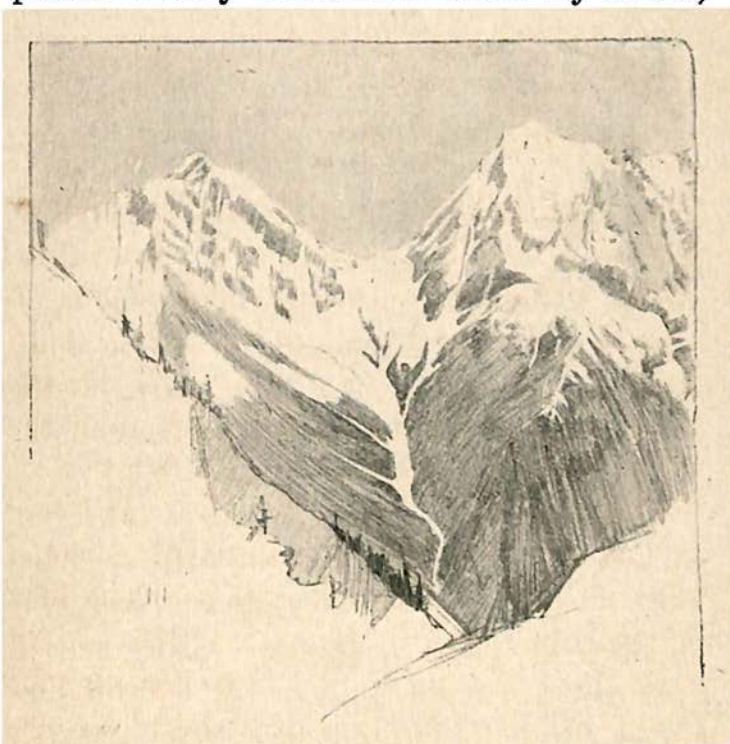
CHAPTER IV.

BAGROT, DIRRAN, AND GARGO.

GILGIT itself is a most delightful place, with green fields and fruit trees everywhere, though its pleasant groves and beautiful walks are surrounded by barren hills. The river runs through the centre of the broad valley, and divides the desert from the fertile fans on which it is situated.

The first day after our arrival we were invited to dinner by the Resident, Colonel Durand, and as all our baggage had been sent off that morning to Bagrot, a question of dress arose, for we were in the lightest and airiest of attire for our hot march on the morrow. Conway was fitted out by Dr. Roberts in a curious costume. He retained his heavy marching boots, patched knickerbockers, and long stockings, then came borrowed plumes of red sash to hide the want of a waistcoat, a dress shirt and tie, and

a dining jacket. Jack and I were left to our own resources, as Conway had exhausted the supply, and we were lovely sights. I had an old black coat without shirt or collar, but I pinned a dirty white scarf round my throat,



and for the rest I was like Conway. Jack had neither scarf nor black coat, only a light linen coat much torn and stained, and native made knickerbockers, loud plaid decorated stockings and *chapplis*. We washed in one of the irrigation channels, drying our-

selves with an old shirt, and Colonel Dicken lent us a brush; then, without a shave since we left Srinagar, we were ready to dine at the Residency. We had doubts as to our reception, for we looked two of the most disreputable tramps that ever presented themselves at a respectable house, and we sat in the moonlight on the fence surrounding the grounds of the bangla, waiting for the bugle, wondering whether we ought to go, though there was nothing to eat anywhere else. Colonel Dicken joined us just then, so under the shadow of his respectability, and after tripping over several sleeping servants in the doorway, we presented ourselves.

Colonel Durand had made a perfect picture of the interior, and it was quite a revelation to see such charming rooms so far away from art and civilisation. Of course our fears were groundless, and receiving our apologies with an amused smile at the odd picture we presented, Colonel Durand welcomed us. We had a most delightful evening, but I had continually to look at my companions and their costume, to keep from forgetting I was not in London, instead of sitting in the centre of the Himalayas, surrounded by savage

tribes, and all the primitive life of uncivilised nations.

Taking care not to trip over any more servants who were lying about on the verandah outside, we said good-bye to our pleasant host, and Jack and I made for a deserted tent where Zurbriggen had fixed up his bed. We made ourselves as comfortable as we could on the ground after a few *Donnerwetters* from Zurbriggen, at our waking him. Conway and

Bruce were put up by the officers in their quarters.

We were all kindly provided with ponies by Dr. Roberts next morning. After good-bye to Colonel Dicken, who was going to the Dishtal Nala to shoot, we rode through the paths that divide the fields of growing grain, and descended to the light suspension bridge made by Captain Aylmer for the transport of troops the year before, during the Hunza

campaign. Over the bridge we were once more in the land of waterless desert, strewn with rocks and boulders of conglomerate. I never was much of a rider; but to canter through country like this was a great deal more than I would attempt. I saw Conway and Jack try in a most reckless manner to catch up the officer at the head of a mountain battery on the march to Hunza, the ponies taking everything that came in their way. I could see their hoofs slipping on stones they struck, and thought every moment they must surely be down, but they were as sure-footed as a *markor*, and never missed their footing. However, I and Zurbriggen, who was of the same way of thinking as myself about riding here, kept at the tail of the battery and admired the capital way the men got over the ground. We parted with them at the entrance of the valley to Hunza and Nagyr, and shortly after we came to a broad rolling level of sand. A quick trot over this brought us to our first rope bridge.

While our little group was dismounting, I noticed curious hesitating glances cast by different members of the party at the swaying structure which we had to cross, and used as I was to the sea, I myself hesitated, when I

had examined the material of which the ropes were composed. They were simply twigs plaited in three-stranded plait, three or four ropes of which formed the foot rope, and elbow high on either side were three more for hand hold. The thing was held together by V's of single rope at varying intervals, and to prevent the hand-ropes being drawn to the side by the weight of the person crossing, forked sticks, four or five to the bridge, were stuck on them, and these had to be climbed over. Altogether it was a pretty nervous balancing feat. The whole was supported on either side of the river from timbers fixed in pyramids of loose stones, the ends of the ropes being fixed in the same way. The bridge hung low in a deep curve over the boiling torrent. One of our Gurkhas, Karbir, after carefully strapping all he was carrying on his back, ice axes, camera, my sketching bag, &c., was the first to try it, and, carefully making his way with long strides down the smooth worn ropes at the end, he got along the more level curve of the middle. The ice axes catching every now and again in the projecting ends of the twigs, gave him some trouble, but soon he was standing on the opposite side with a broad grin of triumph.

When my turn came I found it very difficult to get a good hold of the rope, and wished many a time on the way that they were composed of good manilla, for the sharp ends of the twigs tore my hands. When I was right over the water, the constant looking for good foothold, some of the strands being broken, soon started the bridge apparently flying up stream, with much the same effect on me it would have on a sailor if his ship took to driving twenty knots an hour sideways; but a look up at the bank now and again brought it back to its moorings.

The rest of the road to Sinakar was of the same desolate character. Our camping-ground overlooked a deep gorge, above which the picturesque ruined fort was built, making an excellent background to a sketch looking down over the valley, with the Chilas hills in the distance.

On our further journey up the valley the next day, we were met by the inhabitants of Bulchi with their band of five performers—two big drums, a pair of tom-toms, and a couple of pipers—and the principal men of the village. It was a picturesque crowd, composed of old grey-bearded patriarchs, and young men, with oily, jet black hair hanging on

either side of the face, wearing the comical round Dard caps, and loose coarse pyjamas, a leg of which would make an ordinary suit of clothes for an Englishman. Their long shirts were tied with a coarse sash at the waist, and they had sleeves that would reach almost to the ground, if they were let fall. Over all was the great coarse blanket which always drapes gracefully, whether wrapped round them as it was when very cold, or thrown over one shoulder when warm. We were great objects of curiosity, but the heartiness of their welcome gave us much pleasure, it was so evidently sincere.

The band marched at the head of our party shrieking and tum-tumming for all it knew, while the principal men walked alongside, and gave us all the information they could. We sadly missed some one to interpret, for though Conway had made great progress in his Hindustani, that language was not familiar to most of them. The village was *en fête* when we arrived, and in the main square, under the shadow of the mulberry-trees, and overlooked, I am sorry to say, by what we felt to be the midden of the town, two *charpois* were set out covered with blankets, on which we were requested to recline while they served us with

fruit, milk, and everything they thought we should like, and they could supply. The population sat around in a circle, and the band played, and the villagers danced, in the slow measure of the country, posturing and twisting, while the spectators applauded. The children, who were mostly naked, played about among the groups like children all over the world, chasing each other or pushing some shy one a little nearer to us when it wasn't looking. But some sat and gazed at us awe-struck.

The Lambadhar, or headman, recommended us to camp there, but Conway wished to get to the Bagrot glacier that evening, if possible, and we pushed on till we came in sight of it. Here we were stopped by a rock ridge running across the bend of the valley, over which it would have been difficult to make our way that evening, so we decided to camp and cross next morning to the other side of the glacier. The weather was looking very threatening, and eventually it turned out a wet night.

Zurbriggen, who had surveyed the glacier during the evening, led us next morning to the route he had selected. The coolies were sent round the foot of the ice in charge of two Gurkhas, accompanied by village guides, to a camping ground recommended by them.

Then commenced the first glacier experience of Jack and myself. We scrambled over some stony moraine into a gully of wet slush between it and the ice, which rose at a steep angle about forty feet above us, black, wet, and dirty. Jack's *shikari*, who thought he knew more of the mountains and their peculiarities than anybody else, tried to skip up to the top, but a confused mass of white turban and shawl mixed with mud and stones, curled up in an icy pool at the bottom, was the result, and his vapouring was over, while he gathered himself together, and slunk to the rear of the party. However, he was a good man on the rocks, no matter what he knew about ice, and his boasting was not without grounds. Zurbriggen, meanwhile, with a good laugh at the incident, had set himself to cut steps, or rather a perfect staircase; he evidently knew our abilities, and we began to mount the ice. Bruce's dog, Pristi, who accompanied us from Gilgit, had watched the discomfiture of the *shikari*, and mounted step by step as we did. On top a perfect chaos of crevasses and seracs presented itself, and roping became necessary. Zurbriggen gave us instructions how to proceed, especially addressed to Jack and me, who were on a rope with him. The

only means of getting on to the best part of glacier was by a knife-edge of ice, with black death on either side, bounded by cold horror. He explained to us that if one of us slipped, the other was to jump off on the other side, so that we would hang like a pair of rabbits over a door, instead of both going down together. It may have been very good advice, but I am glad to say no need arose of putting it to the test. I heard Jack mutter that he would be hanged if he would, but it was "nervy" business balancing on the flat steps knocked off the edge. Then there was more step cutting down and up seracs, and more jumping crevasses. The rope was a great cause of swearing and recrimination, for I was continually brought up short by Jack, when he was negotiating a more difficult part than another, and then I served him the same, until we got to slinging names and sarcastic remarks, and our ancient friendship seemed about to dissolve. But the passage was soon over: in the hurry at the last staircase, a step missed saved me the trouble of thinking I might not reach the bottom without a fall. However, I was not hurt, and felt thankful to be off slippery ways. The steep, perpendicular face of the crumbling moraine,

from which the ice had retreated, had next to be surmounted; it was about eighty feet high, and no step that was dug out would hold a second person; so, covered with dust, sweat, and mud, and in vile tempers, we at last reached the top and entered a beautiful forest of pine-trees. A crisp tramp through the welcome shade, over dried leaves, soon restored our equanimity, and brought us to a

pleasant camping-place, where, shortly after, our tents were up, and all was prepared for a fortnight's work in these valleys. We were now on the ground where the real surveying and exploring must commence, and an attempt would be made to cross some of the snow passes into the Hunza valley.

The district selected for the first work of the expedition comprised the two deep valleys, branches of the main valley we had come up

from Gilgit; they were surrounded by all the great peaks of the Hunza Nagyr and Gilgit district. On the west, Raki Pushi's great buttress, Chiring Chish, towered over the Bagrot glacier 10,000 feet above us, with its range of satellites spread out on either side, like the wings of an immense snow bat. North was the great range that overlooked Hunza Nagyr, with peaks 20,000 to 23,000 feet crowning its summit. Hidden from us at the head of the second valley lay the other great peaks of the Haramosh range; and on the south, more beautiful than all, was the dome and lily-like bowl of Dubanni, the highest of whose many peaks measured 20,168 feet. I had subjects without end for sketching; Conway had a lovely piece of surveying to try his prentice hand on; Bruce and Zurbriggen the most perfect selection of virgin peaks in the world to climb, and Jack bear, ibex and wild cat to shoot. It was a perfect life, and we took to it as if we had never known the trammels and artificiality of civilised existence. We felt that we lived the life we were meant to live, and revelled in the light as men who had been released from a prison house.

Taking a gun under my arm and my note

book, I went out the first day to select subjects for my work. The scent of the pines, and the brilliant sunlight striking through the trees, the cheery voices of the birds, the crisp rustle of the dry leaves underfoot, made me feel like shouting in very gladness of heart to be alive.

I could see Dubanni looking glorious, its lofty dome in perfect majesty dividing the fleecy clouds which almost rivalled it in whiteness. Their blue shadows sank and rose again out of the basin, fluted and pencilled in delicate lines with the tracks of innumerable avalanches, from which its glacier emptied itself milk-like into the dark valley beneath.

I could also see Chiring Chish from my seat on the high moraine. It was for ever growling and grumbling, with a perpetual rattle of avalanches shot down from its dome-shaped top like falling comets. Below me was the tortured Bagrot glacier, crumbled and crushed, winding its way to the mouth of the valley.

When Bruce and Zurbriggen, with the Gurkhas, had conquered one small peak of 18,000 feet, and Conway had surveyed and mapped the glacier on the east side of the valley, arrangements were made for a minor

expedition to the other side. Crossing the glacier higher up at a more level and unbroken part than we had been on the first day, we soon reached the opposite moraine. Conway and Zurbriggen left us to climb a near ridge overlooking the valley for a surveying station, while Jack and I went on and selected a suitable place for a camp. We found one a little way up the Kamar *nala* near a glacier stream in the shade of some pine-trees. As only one tent was being brought over, Jack and I set to and made ourselves a leafy bower of pine branches, and got lunch ready. Conway turned up in a state of mind wholly unlike his usual cheery, bright nature, which was caused by the unfortunate smashing of his favourite camera, but ever ready of resource, he soon brightened up and tinkered it with wax, and could manage to use it till properly fixed.

Bruce came in rather late with the baggage, and was feeling very unwell. Arrangements were made for a climbing expedition, and Conway and I, with Zurbriggen and two natives, were off early in the morning to make as high a camp as we could for our peak next day. At the head of the nala the foot of the *couloir* appeared, from which the stream

issued that ran by our camp. We were soon on its icy surface, and a steady upward climb to the turn of the gorge, down which it flowed, showed us its twin fan-like sources, under the broad faces of two peaks 10,000 feet above, one of which we intended to climb. We also discovered that it was swept by stones from one side, for as we climbed I asked what a little speck of dust, that kept spouting like sand struck by rifle bullets, high up a broad, dry side *nala*, might be; but the coolies had seen it also, and no answer was required, for their frenzied efforts for shelter were enough to tell me what it was. We stood still and watched it coming nearer and nearer, and at last, after hitting the ice and rebounding twice, a great rock, going as if shot from a cannon, and whirling like a catherine-wheel, smashed itself into a thousand atoms far above us on the rocky wall of the *couloir* we were climbing. We quickly got past this dangerous spot, and going steadily for two hours we found a great overhanging rock stuck in the face of the peak we hoped to climb. Under the shelter of it we pitched our Mummery tent, and prepared for the night. From where we were camped we had a splendid view of the valley below and the

peaks that overlooked the Bagrot glacier, right up the Sat nala to the Gargo glacier, which we were to explore later. A snow-storm was gathering over it, and made a grand picture, which I painted, sitting on the ledge of our camping ground. If I had fallen I should not have stopped rolling for two or three thousand feet, but there was nowhere else to sit, and the fire, over which Zurbriggen was making some soup, shared the seat, so, with the driving smoke and the ashes blowing about one, sketching was not all a pleasure at an altitude of 13,000 feet. Snow commenced to fall around us; through it we could hear the *Ram Chukor* crying far below, as the three of us crawled into our little tent, and made ourselves as comfortable as the situation would permit.

At 2.30 the next morning Zurbriggen woke us up saying it was time to start, and good man that he is, he had a hot tin of Kock's meat peptone ready. So, waking up the two coolies, who were sleeping under the rock wrapped in their thick blankets, we packed the tent and sent them down.

Zurbriggen led us across the snow in the grey dawn towards the opposite peak, which he thought the easiest of the two, but when

we were nearly over, he changed his route, and made for the *col*. The snow was very soft, and it was continual deep wading the whole way. The work was fearful, and at last I left my sketching bag on a knob of rock, for it felt about a ton weight. On the *col* we had a rest and a tin of Irish stew, and started up the arête to the peak north of it. The perpendicular walls of slate-like rock of which it was formed seemed to me to offer no foothold at all, but Zurbriggen's excellent eyes found out many a crack and cranny to climb by. I was glad to get hold of something more substantial than the snow we had been ploughing through, but as we got higher, I could not help thinking how on earth we were to get down, for on either side the arête fell away in almost perpendicular slopes of rock and ice, hundreds of feet below. And then when we thought we were near the top, and turned a corner, we found ourselves on a little isolated peak away from the main ridge. Zurbriggen calculated it would take us seven hours more to do the big peak, and as the clouds were gathering and it was late, we decided to abandon the attempt, and be satisfied with what we had done. So our first peak, which we named the Serpent's

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Tooth, had been climbed, and I had made my first ascent.

Our return down the rocks was more difficult, as I expected. Handhold of course one could see, but when one's feet are hanging over nothing, an eye in each big toe would be useful. In one place the old foothold had given way underneath. Zurbriggen had fixed himself in the shelf above, and to it I hung by my hands. After trying to reach with my foot a point of rock which I could see over my arm, I asked if he was all right, for if so I would let him swing me into it with the rope. His cheery very good, *atcha!* gave me confidence, and letting go, I swung in from over empty space and caught my toe in the place, and was all right. After this we were soon on the *col*, and shared a tin of cold soup. From the *col* the snow *couloir* ran straight down. We decided to glissade, but the snow was not quite hard enough for our boots. We sat down and shot away at a tremendous pace. I had a glimpse of Conway as he flew past me, the centre of a snow circle thrown over him by his feet, but suddenly I struck a mound of snow, and shooting through the air landed on a second, which pitched me straddle-legs on a third, where I stopped.

Getting out of this, I had a look for my bag, and finding it, started off again till I brought up at the hard surface. I tried my first standing glissade, with the usual result, for my feet shot out, and I became a confused heap, but persisting in the attempt, I landed at the bottom in proper style. Shortly after we were in camp, and found Bruce very ill with Burma fever. Fortunately Dr. Roberts had arrived to spend a few days with us.

Bruce felt unable to move the next morning, and leaving him, comfortably fixed in the leafy hut Jack and I had built, in charge of Roberts' hospital orderly, with a Gurkha and coolies, we returned to our main camp at Dirran, glad to be back once more where we could get a cup of good tea and a smoke. Unfortunately the cigarette papers Jack and I used were done, but Dr. Roberts gave us the tissue paper from his medicine bottles. This evening I had made a platform of pine branches underneath my tent, and the misery I suffered all night getting the spikes out of my body and trying to lie comfortably was unbearable, while the night was made hideous by some wild cats, fighting over the tent refuse. Pristi, who would not face them, added a growling accompaniment. Talk of

the row made by a night concert of London cats, it is purring in comparison to a Himalayan tabby on the prowl!

The next day was mostly spent by the members of the expedition in darning stockings, mending clothes, and getting ready for a change of camp. We had had some very wet weather since we came here, and this day it rained all the afternoon, the greatest drawback to all work in these regions.

Passing through the village of Sat, or rather over it, on our way to Gargo, for trunks of trees with rough hewn steps lay against the low flat roofs of the houses, we explored its smelling streets from the roofs, and passed on into a lane of wild rose-trees. The villagers were very attentive, and the head men gave us all the information in their power, a courtesy we received from all the villages we passed through. When we reached the foot of the glacier it was almost indistinguishable from the valley around, so thickly was it covered with earth and stones, but its position in the valley, and the dirty black faces down which sand and stones continually rushed, marked it out. The track led over its surface, on which flowers and shrubs grew at intervals, and we saw the recent track of bear, and

Jack's hopes rose high in consequence. After four hours' scrambling over the horrible surface, we reached a beautiful glade, between two old grass-covered moraines, where we decided to camp.

There was a possibility of our having a lively time at this place, for it was evident from the marks about the ground that bears frequented the woods and thickets near us, and we were not mistaken. I was sketching a view of Raki Pushi enveloped in clouds, when I saw Zurbriggen, who had gone out to explore the place, returning with haste and in great excitement. He told me he had seen a bear, and pointed to a distant patch of snow, across which I could see a black spot moving slowly. Getting a rifle from the camp, he went back, but did not see it again. It was probably frightened away by Jack, who was out bird collecting.

Jack made an early start next morning, and while we were at breakfast came in with the air of one to whom bear-shooting was an everyday occurrence. He had shot a fine specimen of the red bear, and got a story that will last till the next bear he shoots.

Of course I must go out bear-hunting the next day. It was not great fun to be roused

out of one's warm eiderdown bag at half-past three in the morning, with the temperature somewhere between twenty and thirty degrees below freezing point, to have a half-boiled cup of chocolate and a dry biscuit for breakfast, and do a long march through tangled wood on steep hills. The *shikari* made frenzied gestures all the time for us to be careful and not make a noise, though I don't believe there was a bear within ten miles of us. We were placed in a position to see any animal who was fool enough to come out to feed a morning like this. Oh, how I longed for one cigarette! After innumerable false alarms that bear were in sight, we lighted up and wandered back to camp. I did this for four mornings without any success, and made a vow that if any bear wanted to be shot he would have to come to my tent and bring a gun with him.

A beautiful *maidan* behind our camp gave Conway the chance of laying out a base-line for his plane-table work, and his map got on rapidly and had some shape, now that he had commenced to ink it in. It was a chaotic jumble of lines and stars to me before. We had many pleasant hours together while I sketched and he worked at his map.

After a week spent here, our work was almost finished, and it was decided that Jack and I should return to Gilgit to collect supplies for the march to Hunza-Nagyr, while Conway and Bruce would try and cross over the watershed that divided it from Gargo and meet us there.

Sitting on the ice during a severe snow-storm, and the damp and exposure, had brought a severe illness, and the pain and agony I suffered on the way back to Gilgit will never be forgotten by me. The discomfort, accentuated by the last day's march of eight hours under a burning sun and without water, resulted in my being laid up at Gilgit for five days, at the end of which, through the kind attentions of Dr. Roberts, I was fairly well again. Conway and the whole party returned, all feeling the effects of the bad weather, which prevented them from doing the pass into Hunza.

Dr. Robertson, who was now in charge of the district, Colonel Durand having gone to India, made our short stay very pleasant, as well as of great interest. He had just brought back the Kaffirs and other chiefs who had been through India with him to see the power of the English Raj. The series of photographs and

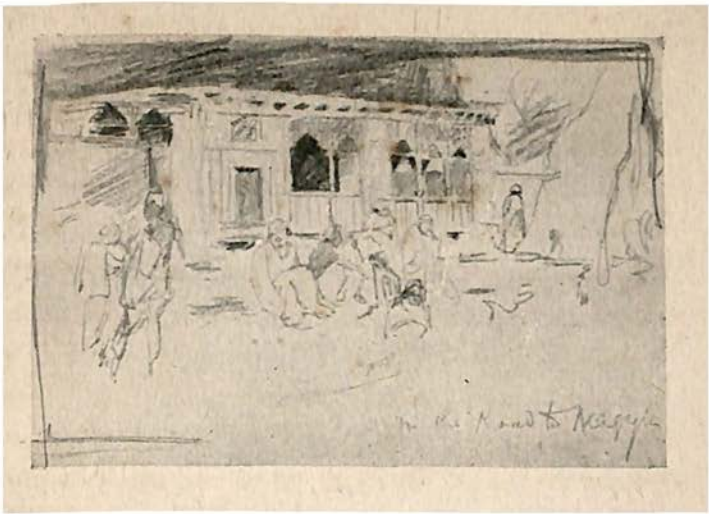
curiosities he had made and collected in Kaffiristan filled me with a desire to visit such picturesque and artistic people. His stories of them, however, gave a different turn to my desires, though the representatives of the people he had with him at Gilgit did not impress me as being very bloodthirsty.

But even then I think I fancied Dr. Robertson was much more interesting than his following, or even than his experiences. Now he is known to every one in England, as he was then known to all on India's northern frontier, for a man of rare courage, coolness and determination, not often combined with political judgment. It is not quite easy to put him down in words, but to any one, even with no more experience than my own, he at once stood out as the very man for the position he held, and even for one much higher. To listen to those who know him is to be impressed above all things by his extreme thoroughness and the peculiar way in which he either does the absolutely right thing, or, at any rate, selects the best in circumstances when all may seem equally bad, until after-experience and thought show he was right. And to listen to him tell stories of his stay in Kaffiristan with its

thousand hazards—one day, I hope, to be written fully by himself—or of his time in Chilas, when his combatant officers were wounded and he had fighting charge of the expedition, is to admire the modesty with which he relates experiences that might make a modest man vain.

I remember one of those who knew him best say this of him:—"He is never content till he has gone through every single possible variation of a thing, and worked it out to the end. I have seen him take a thing and walk for hours with his brows knitted, and then at last his face would clear, and we knew he had the best way out of the difficulty that any man could devise."

I think this is true, and if he has faults, they are the defects of his qualities, and the defects which must often distinguish the leaders of men either in war or diplomacy. I can imagine he might say that one could not "make omelettes without breaking eggs" —breaking a whole basketful if need be.



CHAPTER V.

HUNZA-NAGYR.

WE looked forward with much interest to our journey through Hunza, as we should meet the people who had so bravely defended their country the year before, but on once more crossing the bridge, with a silent salute to the green fields and groves of Gilgit, it was with some regret that we turned our faces to the long march before us.

The valley up which our road lay was a scene of terrible grandeur. There were great boulders of rock fallen from the mountains above, caught on ledges of the hills, looking as if a touch would send them thundering to

join their companions in the valley below. And whether our path was hazardous or not, it certainly looked so.

At noon we had a rest and some lunch by the river side under the shade of an immense boulder, before commencing the ascent of a high *parri*. The road over this was a mere shelf cut along the top of a precipice that fell away to the torrent five hundred feet below, without any protection, while the other side rose straight up, and was in many places overhanging. While winding along this narrow path with my horse—one which Dr. Roberts had lent me—every now and again feeling the ground with his hoof before going over it, I saw, on suddenly turning a corner, that part of the road had fallen. The horse stopped—for I left him to his own devices—and hesitated for some time; but at last, carefully testing the ground, he crushed along the inner side, and holding my leg up, we got past. The sensation while all this was happening was certainly a peculiar one, for the broken part was at the corner of the road, which I could not see, and before me and all around me was immense space, above and below. I was rather glad when we were over that bit.

Nomal is a fine, broad, open valley, with plenty of cultivation and groves of trees well watered by the river. We arrived late, but I managed to get a sketch of the green valley nestled under the great, high hills before nightfall.

We had a long, hot march to Chalt next day. It was the same terrible desolation

under a fierce sun, and the valley's sides around and above scorched us with the fiercest heat. The only thought in our minds all the way was to get it over as quickly as possible. And we looked in vain, as we turned some spur of the valley, for a green spot to relieve the eye from the dreadful monotony of burnt rock and sand. But at last a green line across the sky told of the

high plains of Chalt, and soon we were climbing a grassy slope and cheerily greeting a native driving some cattle. We passed on to the fort, the grim warden of a grimmer land.

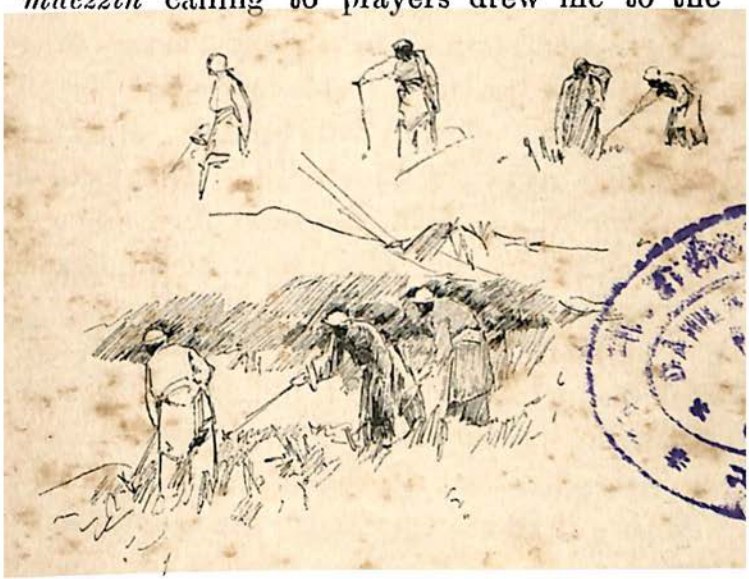
Next morning we crossed the Hunza river by another of Captain Aylmer's suspension bridges, and climbed to the pass overlooking Nilt, where we had a splendid view of the open valley and the great Raki Pushi range sweeping away to the north. The distant fields of Nilt looked green and fresh beyond a basin-like valley of dull grey sand and stone.

Under the shade of some apricot-trees we had tea, which was prepared for us by the Kashmiri guard stationed there. Further on we inspected the fort, the blown-up gate, and narrow, dirty streets, under the guidance of Harkbir and Karbir, both of whom had been at the taking of the place. Their excited remarks as they described the scenes in the streets, while pointing out bullet marks on the walls which they said they had made when trying to shoot some one of the escaping garrison, brought the scene most vividly before me.

Passing from this memorial of brave deeds,

we continued our way to the camping ground of Gulmet, bright and fresh with irises and crocuses, and under the shade of the fruit-trees we pitched our tents for a day's exploring and sketching.

In the evening the sound of horns and the *muezzin* calling to prayers drew me to the



shade of the chinars, under which nestled a picturesque mosque, the only building outside the walls of the fort. The standing and kneeling worshippers, each one of them a picture as he stood on the praying platform with the long straight lines of his blankets falling in statuesque repose, the grand, noble faces of most of the men, with their black side

locks of hair, surmounted with the rolled *dard* cap, and lighted up by the setting sun as they gazed in adoration towards their *Kiblch*, gave me great pleasure, and something which was more than pleasure, perhaps a little reverence for their childlike simplicity. Their solemn return to the great gate of the fort only made the picture more perfect, so beautifully was everything in keeping.

There were subjects here without end, and I made a perfect sketching trip of my stay, regretting the moment of departure. I found no difficulty whatever in working from the natives, who were all obliging and most attentive.

We met young Secunder Khan, a relation of the Rajah of Nagyr, at Tashot, where we camped on our next march. He was going *shikaring*. The village band was in attendance, and the usual dancing took place, accompanied by the usual uproar.

Our way from Gulmet led through green fields and past orchards, and the mulberries being ripe, the members of the expedition were considerably scattered, and were usually to be found up the trees; the marches were therefore a little longer in duration. At Tashot Conway had recommenced his map, so

that Jack and I, with the principal part of the expedition, arrived first at Nagyr, and were met by the two grandsons of the Rajah, boys of about ten and twelve; their father, I believe, had been murdered the year before. They were accompanied by numerous attendants, and the whole male population of the capital, to do us honour. Their language was unintelligible, but we shook hands and smiled solemnly, and hoped that they were very well, and that all belonging to them were prosperous. Under the circumstances English did as well as anything else. They led us to a raised platform under great chinar-trees, overlooking the polo ground, and there we camped. The young Rajahs sat in our tent door with a circle of followers, who watched our movements with their great black eyes, and were silent and motionless.

We were a great source of attraction to the young members of this royal family. Their chief delight was to be allowed to fire our revolvers, and they begged hard to be given them.

All our work was of interest to them, and each of our tents had its circle of spectators, till it became rather a bore, but they would immediately leave at our request.

The old Rajah, a villainous looking old scoundrel he was, and very old and infirm, paid us a visit. He sat squatted on the ground, while two of his attendants placed their backs at his disposal to lean against, for the natives were all most servile to him, and fought among themselves for the honour of doing any little service he might require. He

invited us to visit his castle, and we promised to do so on our return from Hunza.

The scenery all around us was of different character from the bare valleys about Gilgit and Bagrot; for the hillsides on every hand were terraced with fields, and groves of fruit-trees filled the valley. On the north was a great mountain ridge, with a precipitous face veined with bright yellow rock, that in the sunlight looked like gold, and

which the natives named the Golden Parri. They believed it to be made of gold, awaiting any one who dared to enter the land of the fairies. But those who did would never return.

Putting two Gurkhas in charge of our main baggage, we left Nagyr on a visit to Hunza, crossing the Nagyr river by a rope bridge of

the usual frail construction. We reached the desert ridge which divides the Nagyr and Hunza rivers before the junction opposite Hunza's capital, and, scrambling to the point, where we rested and had a grand view of the whole sweep of valley in which these states lie, we at last reached the rope bridge crossing the Hunza river where it runs through a

deep gorge. When I was going over one of the twigs picked my pipe out of my pocket, flinging it into the river, and on arriving at the other side and looking back I saw Conway had made no attempt to follow. Thinking something was the matter, I returned, and another twig picked out my tobacco pouch. This was far too valuable to let go so easily, and, forgetting for the moment where I was, I snapped at it in the air, and luckily caught it. The jerk, however, threw me off my balance, and I fell against the hand rope, but fortunately catching it before my feet left the foot rope, I was soon upright again.

Conway very wisely would not cross without being roped to Zurbriggen. I suppose he thought I was too gay and giddy on such a circus arrangement.

From the river bank, to which we had to descend after crossing the bridge, we had to climb 1,500 feet up the terraced fields, which faced us like giant steps to some ogre's castle, before reaching the camping ground of the officers and Sepoys stationed there. When we arrived we were heartily welcomed by Captain Bradshaw and Lieutenant Baird, the young officer lately killed at Chitral, who

gave us lunch in the rough stone-built mess-hut they had erected, and we spent a very pleasant time with them.

During the evening the mountains were enveloped in clouds, and rain swept the valleys, and as all thoughts of doing any mountaineering in this district had to be abandoned, we devoted ourselves to exploring the country and interviewing the inhabitants.

During our stay we were favoured with a visit from the Rajah and his Wazier, both of whom had been lately installed by Dr. Robertson. They willingly gave us all the information in their power about the passes out of Nagyr, but told us that the Nagyr Rajah could give us more, and that if he refused we were to point a loaded revolver at his head, which would effectually extract all information. They loved each other, no doubt.

We had an interesting evening watching a polo match, in which the Rajah led one side and Lieutenant Baird the other. All the inhabitants, with a great band, lined the walls of the polo ground, and among them were members of the Chinese Amban's suite, at this time on a visit to Gilgit, in the gay costume of their country, their round moon

faces and small stature making a great contrast with the fine physique of the natives of Hunza. The charges down the ground by the Rajah's side gave one a magnificent idea of the old mediæval jousts.

The Rajah was dressed in a long black velvet coat, with bits of white muslin shirt bursting out round his neck, below his coat, and below the ends of his sleeves, and wore long Yarkand riding boots. He rode a gaily caparisoned pony, and made a fine picture as

he galloped past, with his jet-black curls flowing in the wind. Other members of the court wore long, gorgeous coloured cloaks, while the more ordinary members of the party had only the grey putta clothes of the country, enlivened in many cases by a coloured scarf round the waist. The play was wild and furious, and, though I do not know which side won, I noticed the Rajah started the rounds of the game very often.

We all felt how delightful it would be if we could only stay here for a month or two. Everything that the adventurous or artistic heart of man could desire was to be had in and about the valley. The greatest mountains of the earth were at hand to climb; there was game in abundance, including *ovis Poli*, the desire of every big-horn hunter's heart; while the artist could live in the very life our ancestors lived in Europe five hundred years ago. The costumes were almost the same one sees in old prints; every village was a fortified place; and, overlooking all, was the castle of the lord. Their agriculture, too, was managed on the most primitive principles; fairies and goblins were thoroughly believed in, and their dwelling places pointed out; and with it all was the fighting and dis-

regard for life one finds in primitive races, where those who are always asking for the good old times could have their fill of them.

But after three days in this lovely place Conway arranged to cross to Samaiyar, on the Nagyr side facing Baltit, the capital of Hunza, and make an attack on the mountains from that base. Sending the coolies and baggage by the rope bridges, Conway, accompanied by Jack and myself, started down the Hunza valley to cross by Aylmer's bridge opposite Tashot, going up the other side to Samaiyar.

We met Bruce on his way to Hunza to join us. After exchanging news and telling him our plans, he decided to stop at Hunza and join us the next day, but he fell ill with fever, and we did not see him for four days.

A long but pleasant march brought us to the camp already pitched. Jack had been feeling seedy all day, and was so much worse the next morning that Conway decided to leave him and me while he went on.

We had only a coolie to do our cooking now, as Rahim Ali was still at Gilgit, and we did not live in great luxury. Conway had taken Jack's servant as cook, and our coolie's greatest achievement was a dish of boiled

rice. But the villagers of Samaiyar made up for any deficiencies in our larder, and gave us all the help in their power. Jack became so ill that, hearing there was a native doctor with the Kashmir guard at Hunza, I sent a runner for him, and he came the same evening in all the glory of uniform, with sword complete, and was able to give him some relief.

On the fourth day Bruce joined us, and on the fifth Jack was so much better that he thought he might be able to get to Nagyr.

In the meantime Conway had sent down all his followers with the superfluous luggage, intending to cross a pass to join us at Nagyr. So, getting a horse for Jack, he started off, while Bruce and I marched on foot with the coolies. On arrival we found Jack had hurt his knee through the horse bolting and crushing him against the wall of the town in trying to pass a tree that grew close to it.

The weather was so bad that evening and the next day that we knew it would be very dangerous on the mountains, and we were rather anxious about the party which should have arrived early the second day if they had been successful. We prepared a search party to go out the next morning, but in the evening we had the pleasure of seeing our friends

coming up the polo ground, having turned back to Samaiyar and come on here.

The town of Nagyr is most picturesquely situated, for it is built up the face of a steep cliff, two sides of which fall away in sheer precipice one thousand feet down to the *nala* behind, the towered fortification walls, broken in many places, fringing it on the accessible side, the low, flat mud houses rise in tiers up to the foot of the Rajah's palace and the mosque, built of wood and stones, which crown the top. Behind, but separated by a deep *nala*, rise great brown-red rock cliffs, and from the palace's glassless windows the lord of the valley can see the wide sweep of cultivated terraces up and down his dominions. Outside the town, overhung with a few trees, lay a pond, green and fever-breeding, whose surface scintillated with the flight of thousands of gorgeous coloured dragon flies, while on its grassy banks in the bright, sunny days, the women in ugly garments sit carding and beating wool. High above the polo ground was a beautiful green *maidan* with many fruit-trees, overlooking the town, but separated from it by a deep gorge. On the end of this we found the cemetery, with broken graves, and where the cliff had

fallen away the skeletons and shining skulls of dead Nagyris were exposed. There were some newly-made graves, possibly of those who had fallen in defence of their country at Nilt, and these were bordered with a little railing of rudely carved wood, and looked very neat.

Jack and I in the dead of night ascended to this place to collect skulls. I had marked out two which I thought could be easily got at without being observed from the town. We felt rather nervous, not from any feeling of seeing ghosts, but of the natives seeing us, so, while Jack watched, I explored with my arm among the *débris* of broken timber and stones, of which the graves had been built, and got two skulls which were almost perfect. Shaking the sand and dust out, we tied them up in handkerchiefs, and stealthily returned to camp. Conway packed and sealed them up in a box, and the next morning sent them on to Gilgit.

We paid our promised visit to the Rajah at his palace, and, entering the town through the main gate, we were at once in the narrow, unpaved, steep streets. Wandering up through these, scrambling sometimes over the low houses, being careful not to fall through the

light and smoke holes in the roofs, we came to the roughly imposing gateway leading to the courtyard of the palace. A plunge into a dark doorway, and a scramble up a great trunk of a tree with roughly hewn steps, leaning against a hole above, brought us to the first story. Going up the same sort of stair again, we arrived in the *durbar* chamber of the King, who was seated in an armchair

that looked as if it had just left a second-hand furniture shop in Tottenham Court Road; I believe it was a present from a Gilgit resident. Around the chamber and on the ground were seated the members of the court; in the centre was a square hole, disclosing another on the floor below, like the hatchways

of a ship, without any rail or other protection. *Charpois* were ready for us to sit on, and the palaver commenced.

The old boy was very chary of giving any information about the entrances to his kingdom from the north, and tried to persuade us not to attempt to find out. He had a very intelligent-looking Wazier, who was more communicative, and from whom Conway got a lot of curious and useful information about the passes over the Hispar and the dangers thereof, and about fairies, and legends of the people and their origin. Of course the royal family were descendants of Alexander, like all other rajahs of petty states in these mountains.

Giving our salaams we departed, paying a visit on the way to the mosque of the castle. The archaic wall-paintings of teapots, or things that looked like them, and of swords surrounded by scroll work, were very interesting and quaint.

We met a musician with a native zither, decorated with a gaudy label of somebody's Scotch whisky, I believe, which Conway purchased. Returning to camp, the band had collected, and the day was held as a sort of holiday. Later on the Rajah came down, and

magazine rifles were shown to him, and fired for his edification. The Ranee also sent a present of five eggs in a basket of roses as her contribution to the entertainment.

CHAPTER VI.

MIR AND HISPAR.

A NATIVE standing in full travelling costume on the stone platform near our camp in the grey dawn of the morning, throwing his voice in piercing cries over the valley, woke us, and brought the villagers, hurriedly wrapping their blankets about them, to carry our baggage. They were soon on the way, and we had started on our journey to the most remote parts, where no European had ever been, and where we sometimes wished we had never come ourselves.

The same wonderful labour and skill that must have been employed to bring the country into the state of cultivation in which we saw it, surprised us more and more as we went on. Though enormous glaciers filled the

higher valleys, yet on and up from their very moraines, fields, rich with growing grain, rose tier above tier to the exposed rock of the snow-covered hills above. As we passed through the villages, all the inhabitants, including even the women and children, came out and gazed at us in wonder. We were greatly entertained by their childlike surprise. At Rattallo we were received by the head men of Hoper, a broad, open, green valley encircled by the great Hoper glacier. We camped at Rattallo, one of the five villages of the district, intending to stop the next day and explore the source of the glacier.

Here our party was divided, for Bruce with two Gurkhas, Eckenstein and carriers, left us to cross the Nushik La from the Hispar glacier, meeting at Askole the baggage sent from Srinagar, and then to come up the Biafo glacier, joining us after we got across the Hispar pass. Our party was now reduced to Conway, Jack, Zurbriggen and I, with Harkbir and Karbir the Gurkhas. Colonel Dicken did not join us again after we left Gilgit, and I saw no more of him till I arrived in London.

We spent a pleasant time in Hoper, sketching, surveying, and photographing.

The women were very amusing, we could see them flying as if for their lives when we approached, and sometimes we came across one panting and breathless, hidden in the tall wheat like some frightened bird unable to get away. They were scared to death of us, as they had always been of any strangers, in a land where to be a

stranger meant to be either a prisoner or an enemy. I never was able to get a near sketch of one of them. The men, however, were perfectly willing to stand for their portraits. It was very interesting to watch the weaving of their rough cloth in the open. An old man sat at one end of the web, while two youngsters walked up and

down on either side of it, winding the yarn in and out of sticks stuck upright in the ground. As each one arrived at the upper end, the old man tied the yarn to one of the numerous ends hanging from a beam. I had not time to watch the completion of the process, but was charmed with the graceful action of the youngsters swinging the bobbin, and the picturesque group of gossiping old men looking on.

We had an interesting march to Mir, camping the first day after crossing the Hoper glacier in a beautiful *maidan* amongst a grove of wild roses. We stopped a day for the survey, and then crossed at the junction of the Samaiyar Bar and Shallihuru glaciers, and an exciting time it was. In crossing a narrow edge of ice bridging a crevasse, Jack slipped and fell, but was caught where the crevasse narrowed about fifteen feet down.

Harkbir took the turban off a coolie's head, and jumping down after him upon a great stone caught in a similar way, tied the turban round his waist for the coolies to haul him out. Jack's description of his sensations while down there was most harrowing. He heard the glacier torrent boiling and rushing far below, and the heat of his body was melting the ice round him, letting him slide slowly down to destruction. None of us had seen the accident, but Conway thought he heard a cry and stopped, seemingly just in time to prevent him being lost, as the ice bridge which he was about to cross fell away at that very moment.

I was with Zurbriggen, leading the coolies, and a busy time we had of it, helping them up seracs and over crevasses, but we were soon all safe in camp. And we certainly had some surprising yarns after that about our day's adventures. For the next three days bad weather prevented much work being done, but I was able to get some sketches of fine cloud effects over the mountains and glacier. Zurbriggen went out exploring routes to the great Saddle Peak of Shallihuru, and brought back exciting accounts of numerous ibex which fired me with ambition to secure a

good pair of horns. No regular *shikari* being available, I took a Kashmir coolie of Jack's and started at five o'clock one morning, before the sun had penetrated the recesses of the *nalas*. After a terrible scramble over the loose, friable rocks and snow, causing avalanches of astounding noise, enough to frighten a dead elephant, I arrived at the feeding grounds, to find, of course, all the signs of ibex without the substance. Sending off the coolie to see what he could find, I waited for his report, but the only living things he or I saw were Conway and his party far below on their way to attack the Saddle Peak.

Returning to the camp and to Jack, I spent the day sketching, while he fashioned some vile musical instrument out of a piece of bamboo from a broken tent-pole, and made the place a nightmare of horrible noises in trying to play it.

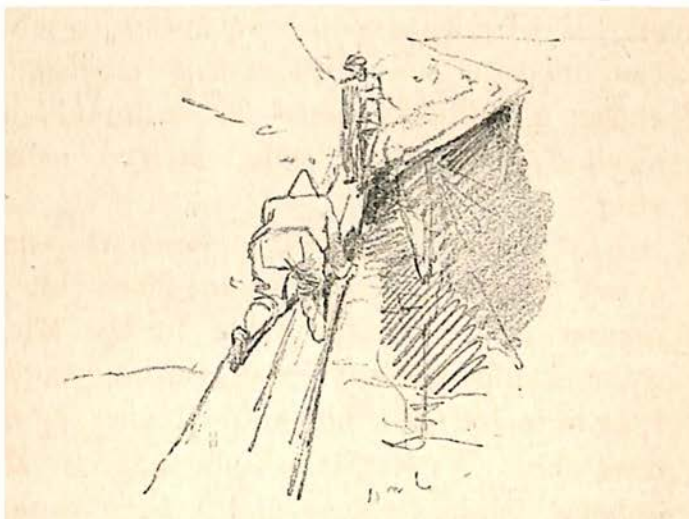
The next day we received a note from Conway, telling us that they were stopped by the broken glacier, and that he would be back in the evening. During the afternoon Rahim Ali arrived from Gilgit with news of provisions. We had finished both salt and sugar, and meat without either

was very insipid, so giving him a cheery "Hurrah" we settled down till Conway came in. He was much disappointed at his non-success, and sitting round the camp-fire at night we arranged to start for Hispar next day.

Jack selected me for his guide on the return journey across the glaciers. We started off with a coolie, and luckily reaching the opposite side without any mishap, we chose a suitable place for camping, and awaited the others, who arrived shortly after.

Next morning Jack was given charge of the heavy baggage, and was to cross by the regular pass over the ridge to the Hispar valley, while Conway, with Zurbriggen and I, were to try for a new route higher up and meet him at Hispar. Unfortunately Zurbriggen, while Conway and I were working on the top, had mistaken the way and lost sight of us, which gave us a long and weary march. We found him late in the evening when we had almost made up our minds to settle in the open for the night. He had got back to the track over the old pass, so that we had gained nothing in the way of a new route.

The march next day to Hispar I think will never be forgotten by any one of us. After a steep descent into the bottom of the valley, when the sun had reached its full power, we seemed to be wandering through the depths of Hades. Our thirst was intolerable. Now and again our path would reach the river, and we would drink bucketsful of its thick liquid,



which was half water and half sand. We were stopped for nearly two hours by a mud avalanche tearing and grinding down a narrow gorge which we had to cross; it splashed blackly, and bubbled in huge thick bubbles, while boulders of rock, looking like great hogs, rolled over and over in it as it boiled along to the river.

We remained at Hispar village two days, preparing for our march through the uninhabitable regions of snow and ice, which now lay before us. This was the last habitation of man we should see for many days.

We employed ourselves during our stay in surveying and sketching, and selecting the men to accompany us. The villagers naturally showed great reluctance to leave their homes

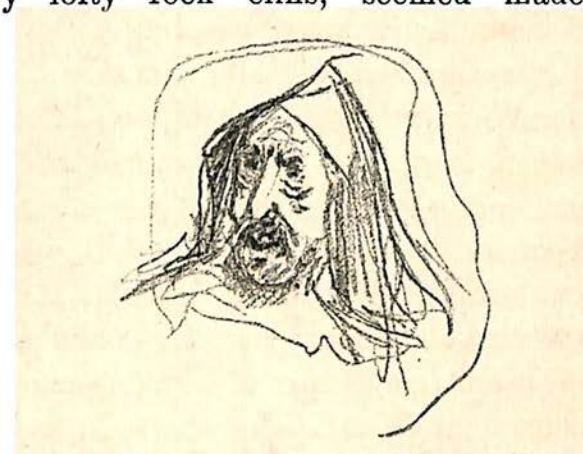
and green fields for the untrodden snows of the mountains; but with the power of written orders from their Rajah and the Kashmir Durbar, the male population of the village was brought before us and we selected the most suitable, the women bewailing the fate of their own particular friends. A number of goats were to be taken for their milk, as far as grass to feed them was obtainable, and sheep were bought to be killed as they were

wanted. Chickens and hens had their legs tied and were strung to the loads on the men's backs. When all was ready, a very dark complexioned Jewish-looking individual, named Shah Murat, professing to be a guide over the Hispar, with another old native, Ali Shah, claiming the same knowledge of the Nushik La, joined us by orders of the Nagyr Rajah.

Zurbriggen, who was not feeling very well, decided to remain at Hispar for one day more, and join us on the next. This he could easily do, as our progress must necessarily be slow with sheep and goats in our company.

About a mile up the valley from Hispar we came to the snout of the great glacier from which issued the Hispar river in a furious and turbid torrent. Mounting the stone-covered ice, the great avenue of glacier-filled valley opened straight before us, as far as the eye could reach; its hilly surface looked like a grey sea, frozen as it rolled. We kept along the hillsides in preference to the ice. Jack and I were a long way in advance, and when about to cross a snow *couloir*, we heard a noise as if the hills were being riven asunder, and looking up at a high precipice, a tremendous avalanche of rocks and snow from

the hidden mountains above shot into the air, and like a great waterfall rained its *débris* in thunder just before us. This was repeated three times. We stayed for some minutes after it ceased before we ventured to cross, and then waited on the other side for Conway and the baggage. Further on a little grass plateau, with some shrub growing near under very lofty rock cliffs, seemed made for



camping on. The natives called it Chokutens, and it was used by them in summer, as a few rough stone huts indicated, when bringing up their goats to the high pastures. A grim-looking icefall, through which tall, spiky rocks tore and twisted their way, hung far above us, but we camped away from its dangerous shoot. In the evening Zurbriggen joined us in good health once more.

Two days more of crawling, climbing and falling over the edges of loose moraine, and the stone-covered surfaces of dirty green, slimy glacier, brought us to Haigutum, the last camping-place before we parted company. I was glad to see it was on level ground. The night before we reached it we were sleeping at such an angle that both Jack and I, waking up with a feeling of intense cold in the morning, found ourselves outside the tent on our way down to the valley below.

The carriers had been carefully watched by Zurbriggen during the marches, and the best of them were now selected for our passage of the Hispar. The remainder, under the charge of Jack, were to cross by the Nushik La. Ali Shah, the guide of the pass, Jack took under his special charge in case of any treachery, as we suspected him and Shah Murat to be spies of the Rajah, who was constantly sending runners with picturesque, dirty letters in Hindustani, which Rahim Ali translated, warning and entreating us not to attempt to cross any of the passes, as they were so dangerous.

It was with some fear in our hearts for Jack's safety that we ate our afternoon meal together. We charged him when he reached

Scardu to send tobacco and anything of an appetising nature he could get to Askole, if he did not meet us there himself. We suspected that once he got to a pleasanter land, the ice and snow would see him no more if he could help it.

On July 13th, at six o'clock in the evening, Jack started with his party. Zurbriggen went

to help them over the *col* and return to us again. We did not see Jack again till October 9th.

Our men in the meantime were erecting huts for themselves of the loose rocks lying around, and in a short time a small village of very substantial dwellings was established, fires were lighted, and cooking and other

household duties were attended to, as if their journeying was over, and this place their future home.

The little encampment looked very pleasant and comfortable amid the grand but inhospitable scenery by which it was surrounded. From the camp we could see the clear ice at the head of the glacier, and under a roof of black cloud bridging the pass, faint, pearly lines of sun-flaked snow made visible its rolling snowfields.

I made a sketch of it in the evening, but the weather was dull and unpromising, and clouds rolled low over peak and ridge. Conway and I chatted over our prospects and plans, and had some words to spare for the grandeur and solemnness of the place. It was very strangely still, only some loosened stone rattling down the depths of a black crevasse in the slow passage of the great ice river, broke the stillness.

In the morning great banks of cloud rolled about the valley, and, enveloping us in their embrace, made us very wet, but more anxious about our companions who would be now crossing the pass. Conway and I lay in the tent reading for the eighth time an old copy of the "Three Musketeers," which

we had divided, and waited for the sun to come out. The men had begun to erect a great stone man, and worked as if they were building as great a tower as Babel. Certainly there was a confusion of tongues—Gurkha, Nagri, Yeshkun, Punjabi and Kashmir. They finished it by placing a great triangular pointed slab upright on the top, and naming the structure "*Kaneywai Sahib Ke Tamerai*,"

which, roughly interpreted means "Conway, sir, his mark." Shortly after finishing this work, Ali Shah, shivering and famished-looking, staggered into camp unable to speak, and raised our anxiety to fever pitch about the fate of Jack and Zurbriggen. Trying to shake the words out of him was no use, so yelling to the gaping servants to bring food and drink, we soon brought him round.

"Where are the Sahibs?"

"Oh, Sahib, I am very ill."

"Where are the Sahibs, you fool, and what brought you back?"

"Ah! Sahib."

"Here, some of you speak to this old devil in his own tongue."

So Shah Murat stepped forward and questioned him.

Jack and Zurbriggen, it seems, had followed him till they saw that they must be going wrong and had sent him back.

Of course he told us that the Sahib said he was to have rupees.

The truth, which we heard from Jack afterwards, was, that he had led them under some very dangerous, over-hanging ice, and gave a lot of trouble, the men insisting on following him instead of Zurbriggen. Eventually, however, the men found Zurbriggen was right, and cursed Ali Shah and all his relations, and, leaving them, he returned to us in the state I have described. This was a nice indication of the knowledge Shah Murat possessed of the Hispar, and we watched him closer than ever as another letter arrived from the Rajah, whom we suspected of trying to intimidate our men, either with threats of his wrath if they went

with us, or tales of the dangers of the pass communicated through Shah Murat.

During our stay cooking of food for ten days was going on, as we expected to see no more wood for fire during that time. The native's food is very simple, consisting only of meal with water, some baking it in flat cakes on a small griddle over the fire, others wrapping the paste round a stone, making a ball of it, and cooking it in the ashes. But they looked strong, healthy men, the simple fare and open air life making them what they are.

After killing and cooking as much mutton as could be easily added to the loads, and sending the goats back in charge of their herd, we left Haigutum on the third day, and making for the clear ice of the glacier, marched over its stream-ploughed, slippery surface. The coolies did not like it, but made for the stone-covered moraine whenever it was near enough. Their progress was very slow, whether from trying to detain us as long as possible on this side of the pass, to see if something would turn up to cause us to return, or from the unaccustomed nature of the road, we did not know.

We passed the opening of the ice-filled

valley leading to the Nushik La, and saw its corniced and avalanche-swept ridge, and thought of the dangerous work our companions must have had to cross it in the snowstorm. Making for the opposite bank we got off the ice, and camped at the junction of the great side glacier with the Hispar.

Continuing our journey next day, as we neared the pass snow-covered crevasses made the travelling very dangerous, but we got to a good camping ground at the side, on the bare spur of a mountain which cut into the glacier like a huge black wedge. Against its snout the ice broke in great masses and made long beautiful curves far out on the glacier in its flow round the obstruction.

We were resting on some rocks while the

Gurkhas put up our tents, and Conway lay asleep with his turban over his eyes, when I noticed the coolies in earnest talk together, not making the usual preparations for the night. They looked in our direction, and were evidently anxious to speak to us. Shah Murat had retired from them a little way and sat on a rock, silent and alone.

At last they persuaded two of the oldest

of their party to take the lead. They came towards us, more shamefaced-looking than defiant, and some I noticed were grinning in the background; but forming in a semi-circle around us, they all put up their hands in a prayer-like attitude, and waited for us to give them leave to speak.

I sat silent for some time for fear of spoiling the picture, they looked so exactly

like old Gothic stone-carved saints from the niches of some grey cathedral, their long loose blankets hanging festooned to the ground from their uplifted arms. A rare and fantastic group they made, standing on the dirty soft snow, the great dark ridges behind rising up into the clouds which eddied and flowed about their hidden summits.

At last I asked them what they were pleased to require.

"Ah, Sahib, the road is bad and we have no food."

I remarked that they were a pack of liars, and that they had cooked food at Haigutum to last them ten days, by which time we should be at Askole, on the other side, where we would provide them with plenty. Their spokesman's Hindustani was about as good as mine, so we perfectly understood each other. I gave him a little English extra, and he gave me a little Yashkun, but his main cry was, that the road was bad and we should be lost, and all cried it in chorus.

I told them to go away, and woke Conway up. He blessed me for waking him, and at his "Go, go," they went, most of the younger members laughing.

Shortly after, one of them espied figures far out on the glacier, and shouted "a letter from the Rajah," evidently thinking it would make us let them return to their homes, but it turned out to be Zurbriggen and a coolie, who had made a marvellous march. Jack was all right, he had seen him safely on his way.

That evening we gathered together the coolies and Shah Murat, and showing them our revolvers, which we explained to them contained the lives of ten men, told them that the first man who ventured to show signs of leaving us would be shot. We gave Shah Murat a special word of advice for himself, as we suspected him of causing all the trouble.

Next morning we found that they had not cooked all the food required at Haigutum, and there being no wood for fire near us, this necessitated their returning there for it.

Selecting ten of them after breakfast, we sent them off for the wood with instructions to be back that afternoon, allowing them no food, so that there would be no chance of them making a dash for Hispar. We settled down for the day, Conway working away at

his observations, while I sketched, and Zurbriggen mended boots for everybody.

The men returned with the wood in a marvellously short time, when cooking went on with vigour, every one seeming in good spirits since the return of Zurbriggen. His coolie had evidently informed them of his wonderful skill, for they were prepared to follow him anywhere.

The evening turned out one of the most beautiful we had witnessed. The icy faces of the mountains were lit up with the setting sun to the brilliancy of jewels, and later the whole valley was enveloped in a soft haze of golden sunlight, wonderful to behold. Sitting smoking on the rocks beside our tents, we watched it fade away into the grey silver night.

CHAPTER VII.

HISPAR PASS TO ASKOLE.

WE had no intention of crossing the pass next morning when we rose at 4 a.m., so we merely left instructions with Karbir and Rahim Ali to make for another dark spur across a great side glacier, and camp there. After breakfast Conway and I, with Zurbriggen and Harkbir, went out on to the glacier again for the remaining portion of the survey on this side, intending to make the passage of the pass early next morning. We found the snow crisp and hard and in splendid condition, and after we had almost finished our work we saw the coolies within hailing

distance on the glacier, as they had been obliged to come well on to it to get round the great side glacier, which forced its way far out into the main stream of ice.

But all this time the pass, clear and cloudless in snowy steps of sparkling splendour, invited us to attempt it, and determining there and then to cross it, we sent off Zurbriggen to find a way for the coolies. When Conway had finished his surveying, he and I, with Harkbir leading, put the rope on and followed in the coolies' track, making straight for the centre of the ice-fall. We were soon climbing the snowy intricacies of its icy galleries, resting midway up under the shade of a great cliff of ice, which was most beautifully coloured. We had a magnificent view of the whole Hispar valley, and of the distant ranges of Hunza peaks far away behind. On either side of me where I once sat for a rest, two fairy caverns hollowed out of great seracs, their emerald depths guarded by crystal curtains of huge icicles, and glittering like diamonds, made a fitting frame for so grand a picture. Continuing our climb up the ice-fall, we reached a gradually ascending snow-field. We were now at a height of 18,000 feet, and the rarity of the atmosphere with

the fierce sun glare, thrown up from the white surface, which burned us with intense heat, made our climb, as we ploughed through the loose snow of the track made by the coolies, a very toilsome one. Conway, who was eager to reach the *col*, untied himself and went on with Harkbir. Soon I was alone in the barren waste, where no sound broke the stillness of the vast solitude, for there was no life of any sort, bird or beast or vegetation; only the long sweep of snow, bounded on each side by walls of ice with dark patches of steep rock, that emphasised the whiteness to an intense brilliance which the eye could not look on without the aid of dark glasses.

At last I reached the top where the coolies were now all gathered together, eating or sleeping. Conway was working hard at his plane table, the Gurkhas had spread a water-proof sheet out, and were melting snow for drinking water in the rays of the sun, and Rahim Ali was preparing lunch with the same *sang froid* he would show in the bangla at Abbottabad. But the view on the other side held me spellbound. It looked like a vast lake, miles in extent, and of virgin whiteness, with buried mountains in its depths, their peaks

rising out of it here and there like great stone men, and bounding it on all sides were snow mountains of enormous height. No opening was to be seen. Where, then, was the great glacier avenue corresponding to the Hispar? Turning to Conway, I asked how we were going to get out of this? He knew there must be an exit somewhere for this tremendous accumulation of snow; but would it be an impassable ice-fall? None of us could tell. Conway gave the order to start—I know it was with no light heart—and we prepared to descend the ice-fall below us to the snow lake. After a descent of about an hour on turning a corner, we suddenly saw the broad opening of the Biafo glacier, a wide, flat, unbroken sweep of white ice, with black masses of snow clouds rolling up to meet us. With lightened hearts we hurriedly looked around for a camping place, and found a very suitable one on the snow under the shelter of a bare rock cliff. I cannot help thinking how most travellers in civilised countries would regard what we looked on as fair luck in the way of camps. It would probably seem a disaster of unequalled magnitude asking for pages of description.

But we were all dead beat, and lay in our

tents caring not what happened, so long as we were in shelter of a sort. A "self-cooking tin" was served out to each, no fire being possible, and, getting a flat stone, we set it on the floor of our tent, and lit the spirit lamp. It gave a little glow of comfort in our trying situation.

Conway and Zurbriggen were terribly done up with working in the hot sun without rest. As I had taken it more leisurely I did not feel the fatigue so much, and looked out with awe at the terrible fog of snow, in which nothing was to be seen, which now swirled about us. Our little camp seemed mysteriously supported in space. I heard the low moans of the men who were huddled in the crannies of the rocks, wrapped in their warm blankets, for they were as frightened as children by phantoms of the air which they fearfully imagined.

But as the grey darkened to night, in it I began to see mysterious mountain peaks glow with a beautiful radiance of pale pink, and faint blue deepening to purple. I thought I was dreaming, but no, there they were, most lovely visions which seemed to move with a curious motion in the driving mist of snow, isolated and vignetted in the dark.

The whole place was uncanny, the air was full with spirits muttering angrily.

I believed in them myself, and half reverted to the childlike condition of our poor coolies, and the next morning we were awakened by them informing us most lamentably that they were dying. A few cheery words from Conway soon set their minds at rest on this point, and they smiled and took up their burdens. The snow was still falling heavily, but the men were no less anxious than we to be on the way down. It cleared off after breakfast, so we roped up and started, and, Zurbriggen leading, we plunged through the soft snow past the foot of a great and very steep rock buttress, piled up like the pipes of some gigantic organ, the top being hidden in the clouds. By noon we were on the hard ice, and there we squatted down on the baggage and lunched. Then Conway plane-tabled, and I made pencil notes. The men were lying about on the ice, huddled up close to each other, eating their dry meal cakes, and drinking the glacier water as we did. Far down the broad flat ice-river we saw a faint colour of green, and made directly for it. The ice was so level that the water did not run off but only about it in channels,

covered over with another thin layer of ice through which we broke at every step. Our tempers were so sorely tried, that at last I suggested to Zurbriggen, who was leading, and just before me, that if he made for some higher ice at the side it might not be so wet there. Almost before I had finished speaking, without another word he plunged into a deep ice-river which was in front of us over the knee, and made for the side. I wished then that I had not spoken, but if I had to follow like a led sheep, I had the grim satisfaction of leading somebody after me. The stream was terribly cold, and the icy water filled our boots. The side was a little better, for it was a ridge of ice forced higher than the main level by side pressure from a tributary glacier. We rested here while Conway made another station for his survey, sending Karbir on with the coolies to fix up a camp on the first bit of green he came to. We leisurely followed after, surveying on the way. But the awful walking had taken all spirit out of us, and we were glad to turn into our tents. Though the whole scene was flooded with the most gorgeous sunset colours imaginable, sunsets just then were not even in my line.

This experience, with the terrible exertion

we had gone through, told severely on all of us. My face was burnt and parched, the skin peeled off in great flakes, and every joint in my body ached. But I had a grand night's sleep, and when next morning I took charge of the coolies to look for a new camp, I felt none the worse for my exertions.

Karbir, in his anxiety the day before to find a camp where there was some shrub, had gone too far down, and this had necessitated Conway retracing his steps to get the connecting station for his map. He started for this work, accompanied by Zurbriggen and

Harkbir, after giving me instructions to explore for a good camping ground with wood about. I pointed out to him a likely place which I had seen through the field-glasses, and said that he would probably find us there.

Striking out over the crevasse and stone-covered glacier at the side we reached the clear ice. The men were now in good spirits and came along splendidly, for Conway had promised them a regular feast of plenty when we got to Askole.

I have made no mention of Shah Murat, our so-called guide, who was absolutely useless for any purpose whatever, for he knew nothing of the route, the country being as new to him as it was to us. However, he was some sort of ornament to the party as he wore a long black velvet coat.

This day I had a pleasant march down, resting at frequent intervals. Karbir had attached himself to me, and attended me in my sketching excursions, carrying my traps, and learning to make all the necessary preparations for work whenever I found a subject. He was a most delightful companion and very intelligent, and we spent many agreeable hours together; he was always cheery, and laughed at all difficulties.

We found a good camping ground at the place I had selected before starting, for it was in a beautiful grass-covered hollow, beside a still lake at the side of the glacier, with plenty of shrub for fire to make tea. Conway did not turn up about the usual time, so I sent men out to look for him, as the moraine hid the camp. After an hour's wait he came in very mad, for I had gone too far also, and he would have to return up the glacier again next day. He could not even console himself with a smoke, but as we were so near Askole, Zurbriggen volunteered to go there and send up supplies, more especially tobacco. We had been without it since we left Hispar, and our only substitute was the dirty fibrous root Rahim Ali had for his water pipe. It was entirely devoid of all taste or smell of nicotine, but it made a smoke and killed flies. It seems a wonder it did not kill us; the smell, at any rate, was strong enough.

Zurbriggen left us next morning. I had been in pain from aching joints all night, and Conway had a touch of fever, so we were utterly unable to do anything all day. The evening effects, however, drew me out with my paint-box, and I managed to make a sketch.

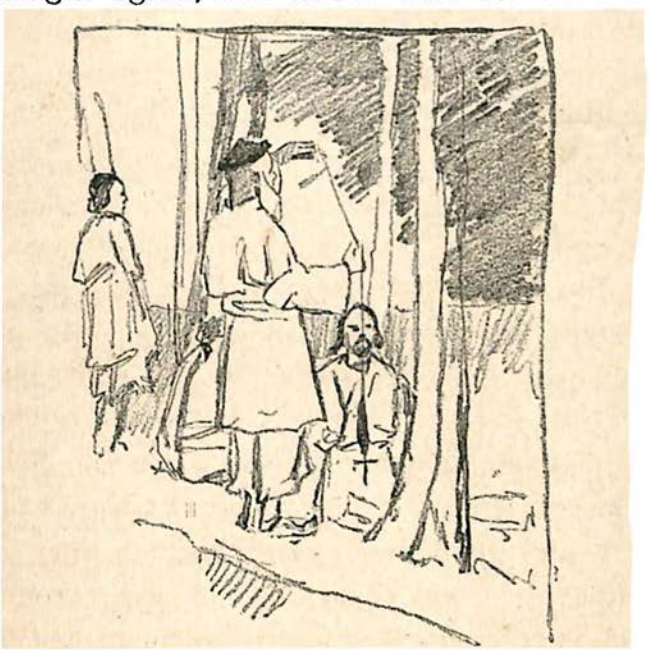
We had another bad night of unrest, but work must be got on with, so Conway and I went out and toiled as best we could. We met coolies, sent by Bruce, camped on the other side of the glacier. Had the survey been completed in that direction the day before we should never have seen them, nor they us, and heaven alone knows where they would have wandered to in that case.

We had bad weather next morning, but it cleared up later. Returning down the glacier, looking for the new camp, we met two more coolies with *kiltas* sent up by Zurbriggen. They also were wandering away into the unknown, looking neither to the right hand or the left. We made them lower their baggage at once, and, as we expected, found tobacco; we had a pipe each, and the luxury of it was divine. We had been in very bad tempers, Conway especially so, as the coolies must have gone too far down again, but we forgave them as we should never have seen these men but for their error.

But one part of our journey was nearly done, and three more days' weary trudging and sliding and scrambling brought us to the pleasant shade of mulberry and apricot-trees. We received the cheery greetings of the

natives of Askole, and once more we had luxuries in abundance.

We found Bruce, Zurbriggen, and Eckenstein here, but no Jack. We had letters from him, and, as we expected, he was making for Srinagar again, and would wait for us there



till we had done fooling round, trying to break our necks in the hills, which he cursed freely and most effectively.

During our stay at Askole many things were seen to, for the extra luggage sent from Srinagar had arrived. New arrangements of equipment were prepared, all our collections

of geological and botanical specimens rearranged, new coolies engaged, and the Nagyr ones dismissed.

For a time here we had a new companion, for Captain Churcher arrived. He had been shikaring in the district. We had a sing-song that evening, accompanied by the banjo, on which he was an excellent performer. We had also a meeting of the members of the expedition. Many things were discussed, our past successes and our future plans. Eckenstein was to return, it being impossible for him to continue further with us, ill-health and other causes arising to prevent him.

The villagers had their usual band and dances to entertain us, and we revelled in plenty. But chiefly we devoted ourselves to baths, and to strutting round in the new clothes which replaced our mountain rags and tatters. Zurbriggen in the meantime turned to the mending of innumerable pairs of boots. We had a good time, too, with letters, and sent off many *daks* with return correspondence.

The change after so many days of hardship was indescribable, and we all revelled in the joy of it. But a more arduous undertaking was before us, though we knew it not. Yet

all preparations were made to meet every possible difficulty, by the forethought of our leader, whom we all obeyed with a trust born of entire confidence in the ability which we now knew so well.

CHAPTER VIII.

ASKOLE TO THE GOLDEN THRONE.

OUR party was now rather a large one, for it consisted of Conway, Bruce, Zurbriggen, and myself, together with four Gurkhas, three servants, and seventy coolies. We had also ten Lambadhars, who left us after the first march, and twenty sheep, twelve goats, and Bruce's dog, Pristi.

On starting from Askole, we retraced our way to the Biafo glacier, and had a hard scramble over its stone-covered snout. On reaching the other side we came across a big lake, made by an embankment of rocks. The road—if it can be called one—led over this dam, which was pierced and cut by many fast-running streams. It looked by no means an inviting way.

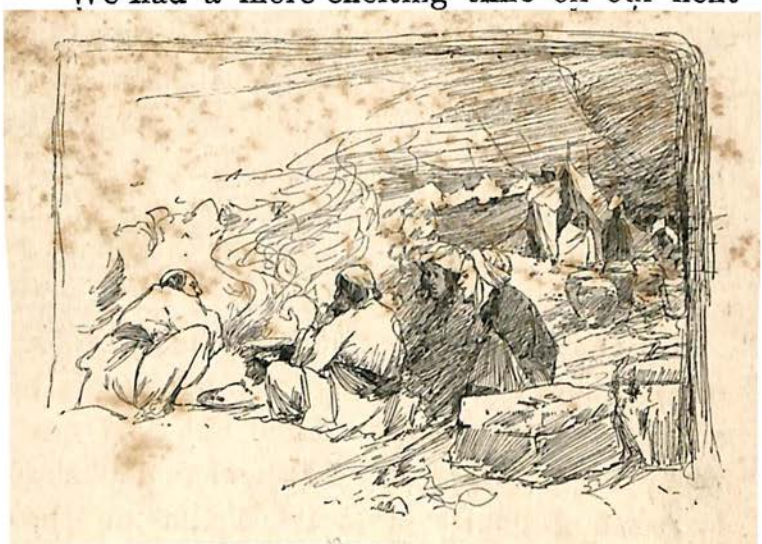
After some consideration, Zurbriggen and the coolies decided to keep round the glacier

edge—a much longer route, involving many nasty climbs—while we determined to ford the streams. The first of them, and the worst, Bruce plunged into at once and waded across, though the water was waist high, and I followed him. Conway thought to get over dry on Bruce's back, and Bruce came over again; but shortly after they entered the water, being then in the deepest place, the current became too strong for them, and happening to step on a moving stone, they nearly fell down. So Conway got as good a wetting as any of us. The sun was so burning hot that our clothes were almost dry before we reached the next stream. But this was pretty nearly as bad as the first and running rapidly, the stones rolling over and over on the bottom with the strength of the current. Harkbir was nearly swept away, but Bruce, who happened to be in the middle, caught him under his arms as he came down stream. I had forgotten the contents of my pockets, and hurriedly clearing them out, found my sketch-book in a very damp condition, while the valuable cigarette papers which Jack had sent me from Scardu were soaking. Carefully separating them, I spread them out on a rock, and gathered them up

dry almost immediately, the sun's heat was so great. The rest were carefully doing the same with any little perishable article which had got damaged.

By this time Zurbriggen came up with us, so we all had a rest and a smoke, and dried our clothes and sweated in the sun.

We had a more exciting time on our next



march, having to cross a rope bridge over the Punmah river. This, with our numerous caravan, occupied much time.

The bridge had been newly repaired, and the leaves having been left on the twigs gave it a gay and festive appearance. The coolies got their loads over one at a time at first, but later on three or four dared to cross at once.

It was very amusing to watch the expression on their faces as they made their way across, doubt and fear giving place to an expression of happy accomplishment when they stood on firm land again. But as the sheep and goats had to be carried over the men returned, and, tying each a sheep or a goat in his blanket with the head out, strapped them over their shoulders. The curious face of the man and the blank expression on the sheep's beside it were most laughable. Pristi was brought over in the same way, and his bark of relief when he arrived expressed in a very human manner his satisfaction that such a peculiar experience was over.

We camped at the side of a small brook running down to the river, and very stupidly on the wrong side, as we found out next day when we prepared to start. Some glacier lake had evidently burst its bounds in the night, and in the morning we found our rivulet a swollen, roaring torrent. It was increasing in volume every minute, and the sooner we made the passage across it the better. The men tried forming a causeway by throwing rocks in, but they were swept away as if they floated.

At last Bruce entered and managed to

scramble over, and I followed next. I found the whole bottom a moving chaos of rocks, but got across wet to the waist. I shouted to Zurbriggen to get the climbing rope, and Harkbir and I caught the end of it, and so made a life-line to which the men could cling. Some of them stripped themselves of their nether covering, but most got in as they saw us do. It was very difficult to keep the rope in our hands, for the men followed one another on it, and our shouting to allow only one at a time could not be heard above the roar of the torrent. Bruce finally returned and placed a Gurkha on a rock above the water to regulate them, and commenced himself to carry over the sheep under his arm. He tried to carry two at once at first, and would have got swept away sheep and all but for Karbir, so that one at a time had to satisfy him, strong as he was. A few of the more enterprising coolies carried some across, but I believe Bruce took half of them over. The men's faces were a study, for some of them were swept off their feet, and hung on to the rope with only their heads above water till a Gurkha went to help them in. They were like a lot of children — wild with fear one minute, and laughing at their

companions the next. But all were safely landed, and we continued our journey watering the way with dripping garments. I know now that it should be an axiom with all travellers to cross any stream they camp at.

It can in no case do harm, and may save infinite labour and risk.

The valleys were now narrower and the mountains higher and steeper than any we had been through; the whole place was

dismal and unpicturesque in the extreme, and the walking most laborious. We came to fans ribbed with hundreds of gullies from five to thirty feet deep, too broad to jump across, and each rib had to be climbed over. Some were so steep that rough steps had to be cut to enable us to get up them. We trudged round the wide circle of these, hoping for a clear level by the river side, but our road only became worse and worse, and rock faces whose sides were swept by the rushing river had to be negotiated on very insecure foothold. We came then to great sand shoots that the first step made move, and one's feet were buried over the boots and held there like suckers, so that it was a job to reach the other side and not be taken down bodily to the river.

We arrived at a place the natives called Bardumal, and waited under the shelter of the rocks for the coolies, who were far behind. The next day we entered the Baltoro valley, and ploughed over the sandy bank of the river amongst low shrubs, where many rabbits were started. The Gurkhas enjoyed an amusing time chasing them, but they had no success. The road here led over a high parri on rough wooden terraces built by the natives

up cracks in the rock's face, then down again to the river and over broad, rusty-coloured fans of *débris* to the snout of the glacier, where we found a beautiful little grove of thorny trees amongst high grass. Bruce and I beat about with our ice-axes, in case any reptile might lurk in it, before we threw ourselves into its cool, soft embrace.

The great mass of the glacier filled the valley from side to side, cutting off the bases of the two mighty ranges of lofty peaks which bordered its avenue. The rushing torrent from beneath it carried off great boulders of rock with a force that made the ground beneath us vibrate as we lay in our tents.

We remained here the next day for our men to get all their *pabas* ready. We needed a rest before we entered upon the ice.

A cry of alarm that we were going to be swept away was raised in the evening. A great mass of ice had broken off the glacier with a tremendous crash, and forced the waters to the side, almost overwhelming our camp, but fortunately doing no damage.

I spent the day sketching the views down and up the valley, for they were scenes of great desolation, most impressive in their grandeur and solitude.

We had terrible work of it getting over the surface of the Baltoro glacier on our first day. We were ten hours jumping from one rock to another and clambering up great stone-covered ice-hills, often to find when we got to the top that the other side was a steep, perpendicular face of clear, black ice. This, of course, meant scrambling down again, though we were sometimes spared that

trouble by the whole surface of rubble starting of its own accord and carrying us with it. As we were all of us looking for an easier way, we soon lost sight of each other, and, indeed, an army might have been marching on the other side of the glacier and we should not have known it, so great in extent and so unequal in its surface is the great valley of ice. We came across each other at intervals resting, but we were so hot and

angry that our words of greeting were few. When we saw Conway now and again, we asked him when and where he was going to camp. It seemed likely that he might not know in such a hole. And now rain began to come down in torrents, and we were still in the centre of the glacier.

At last we reached a great lake with small icebergs, like a miniature Arctic Ocean, and we sat on a big wall of ice overlooking it, amusing ourselves by starting the rocks thundering down upon its shore. We camped here. It seemed Hobson's choice, for night was coming on, and we were all pretty well fagged out. The tents were pitched on a surface of stones to keep our bodies from the ice, and we folded the blankets as small as we could to make our beds a little softer. A trench was chipped out of the ice round the tents to keep as much of the rain from coming in as possible; and then, vainly seeking for a soft hollow for our hip-bones, sleep overtook us, and the grumblings of the poor coolies sheltering themselves under rocks and in hollows of ice were lost to us.

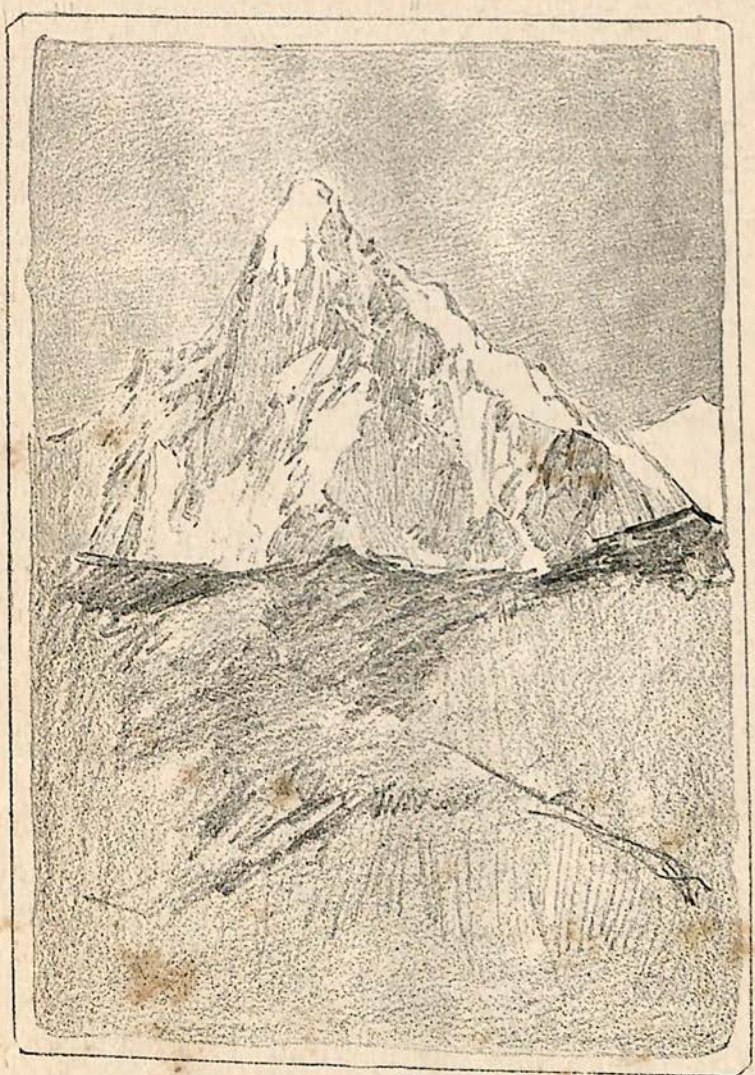
The rain was still falling in the morning, but as it cleared up after breakfast, we determined to find a softer camp for our next

pitch, for the night had not been over happy or comfortable.

During this day we had the same weary stone-hopping, which was only varied by glissades down slanting walls of ice. Bruce lost us during the day, and did not turn up when we had camped—this time in a sandy hollow—so we sent out men to look for him. For he might have been in the next dip of the ice and have never found us. Our yells at last reached him and brought him to us.

Again it commenced to pour, and the great mountains disappeared in the moving banks of cloud, and misery and disgust at the weather made us irritable with everything. As for me, my paints got dirty and my paper wet when I had nearly finished a sketch. But a good night's sleep found us in better spirits next morning, though the weather did everything in its power to damp them. Here I began to suffer the pains of toothache, and as there were no dentists in our party, I had to grin and bear it all the time I was on the glacier. This, added to the other miseries of the place, made my life rather wearisome to me.

The Baltoro has many sins to answer for. Our lives were made miserable and our legs a burden. "Oh, for the wings of a dove" to

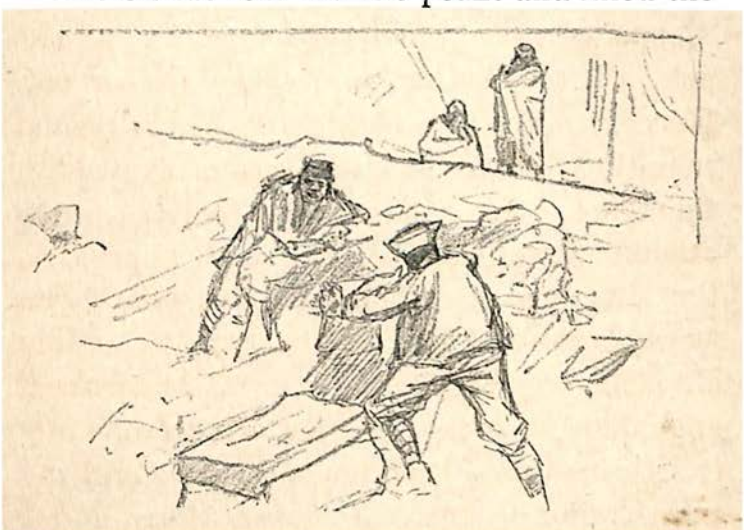


fly, just for a day, was our constant prayer. Things which might have made me laugh in more comfortable circumstances entirely lost their humour. At one time I had found a better path than Bruce, who was in sight, and he tried to reach me. I watched him making his way in the most careful manner up a high, stone-covered hill of ice, and I speculated in a peculiarly cold and curious mood as to whether he would do it or not. He neared the top slowly and carefully, and then there was a crash like a bomb exploding; the whole thing seemed to burst and go rattling down together—he had stepped on the keystone of the lot. I saw him lying at the bottom of the hill he had so carefully climbed, on the top of the offending rock, embracing it with his arms, and hammering it with his fists. I did not hear the endearing words which I knew he was uttering, and I did not laugh, but passed on my way. I had been through it myself, and could not even smile. Still it had been interesting.

This day we had the additional misery of heavy rain, and we crouched in undignified attitudes under low supported rocks, and swore deeply until it seemed futile to swear any more.

We stopped the whole of the next day at our camping ground as the weather was simply abominable. We made "caches" of half the stores, and sent home half the coolies, and amused ourselves by writing our names in great letters of sanguinary tint on the faces of the rocks.

The clouds still hid the peaks and filled the



great hollows of the valley, and we had no view of the mighty giants we knew we were amongst. But we caught glimpses of their towering heights now and again through openings in the moving mass of vapour. It was, however, not so misty as to prevent us doing a little exploring, and Conway and I, with Harkbir, this day found a possible way

at the side of the ice. During our prowl we came across and brought in two pairs of ibex horns, whose owners had evidently been killed by avalanches.

During the march I saw one thing which was very curious and beautiful. I had amused myself on the way collecting the butterflies, which every now and again would flutter out from some mysterious garden which I could not find in this world of ice. However, I came at last to a little patch of green with a peculiar iridescent blue shade shimmering through it, and on stepping upon it only for the luxury of one short moment free from the toil of the rocks, I was enveloped in a cloud of little blue butterflies. The sensation was delightful, and accounted for the peculiar colour on the grass.

In the evening the clouds passed away, and once more we saw the grand outlines of the great peaks against the evening sky.

Next day Conway and Bruce, with Zurbriggen and three Gurkhas, accomplished the first great climb of the expedition, and also settled the point we wished to reach at the end of our journey up the glacier. I stayed in camp to try and recover some of the sleep lost in my fits of severe toothache and head-

ache. During the afternoon Gofara, a Kashmir coolie of Bruce's, arrived from Scardu, having been sent there from Askole with a parcel of papers, letters, and also "The Pictures of the Year," with which I had a unique afternoon. Karbir was employed cooking for his companions, but I was very much amused

with his comments on the pictures when he came to my tent. His tastes were classical, and the female form his delight; he roared with laughter at every picture of the nude, and examined it up and down, not forgetting to look at the other side of the leaf for a view of her back. The mountaineering party returned during this incident, and while wel-

coming and congratulating Conway on his success, we were startled by the loud laughter of the Gurkhas. Karbir had taken his companions to the academy, and evidently their tastes were alike.

We made a short march next day to a place we named White Fan Camp, from the colour of the *débris* of which it was composed. There we had a grand view of the mountain which Conway intended climbing. It certainly was most beautiful in form, and its throne-like shape, covered with a snowy mantle, suggested many names, as The Throne of Asia, from its situation; and The Vacant Throne, from its emptiness. It was named the White Throne, which it retained till we reached it and found it veined with gold, when it was immediately called The Golden Throne. The glacier which came from it we named the Throne glacier.

Bruce, Zurbriggen, and two Gurkhas, went off up the Throne glacier the morning after our arrival in White Fan Camp to select a route to the top of the Golden Throne. Conway and I, with two Gurkhas, started at the same time for a climb to the *col* at the top of White Fan glacier behind the camp, whence we expected to have had a grand view of K2,

the mountain of our desires. We had an uneventful climb up a steep moraine to some nasty seracs, through which we made our way to an easily inclined snow-field that led us to the *col*. The view of K2, its rough, galleried peak being alone visible, was very disappointing; but looking back across the Baltoro glacier, from which we had ascended, the most magnificent mountain landscape imaginable presented itself. It was composed of valleys with glittering ice walls, their sides

ribbed with avalanche tracks, and away in the hot, hazy distance, peak after peak topped and overtopped each other in bright tones of pure pearl. It was, I think, one of the grandest views we had in the mountains.

When I had done some sketches, and Conway had added some more important points to his map, we descended, making for the centre of the glacier to escape from the stones which had started falling through the heat of the sun.

We soon reached camp, and I revelled in a

glorious evening of colour, sketching, as Conway remarked, like one possessed.

We left White Fan Camp next morning, and, striking out across the awful stones once more, we reached the junction of the Throne and K2 glaciers with the Baltoro. We then made for a level belt of medial moraine, composed of flatter and smaller stones, having an easy march to a spot we selected for the camp, from which we knew a good view of K2 could be obtained when once the rolling banks of clouds had passed away. Just then, however, the whole valley on that side, with the great peaks, was completely hidden, and we could only remain and wait for better weather. Conway swore that if he should wait till Doomsday he would photograph K2 and I should paint it. The afternoon of our arrival we waited with paint-box and camera ready for the first glimpse of the great giant, but were rewarded only with glimpses of sunlit rock and ice through the sweeping clouds. In the evening the mists sank low over the ice valleys, and K2, dark and impressive, stood far above them against the silvery glow of the evening sky, a very king of mountains among its stately companions. It was too late for photographs and too dark to paint, so after

making a pencil drawing we turned in for the night, which seemed likely to be a bad one from the threatening character of the weather. As it turned out we had to spend four more nights in this dreary camp.

After our tent was pitched the coolies were sent back to bring up supplies, while the Gurkhas set to and built themselves a stone

hut, roofing it with a mackintosh sheet, and very comfortable quarters they made. A thin layer of small stones was laid under the floor of our tent, but it was far from comfortable, though we spread everything we could underneath us. On awakening in the morning we found the side of our tent sagged in till it almost touched our faces, for it was borne down by the heavy snow which had fallen

during the night. We shivered in anticipation as we opened the tent door. What a sight it was! The whole glacier and all the mountains were covered with new snow. Drifting masses of cloud climbed and rolled over the ice-surface, while higher clouds swept along the mountains, hiding and revealing the peaks again and again.

We were now far from anything that would burn, and at last we had to draw on our small supply of paraffin for the stove for breakfast. We at any rate managed to get a cup of hot tea.

About an hour afterwards Shabano, a shikari of Bruce's, who had taken charge of the coolies, put his head in the tent, having arrived in advance to tell us that four or five of the men were ill. Ten minutes later I saw them dragging their loaded, weary, bent forms through the snow to the camp. When they reached it they immediately sat down and cried in the most exasperating manner like a lot of babies, more, however, from fear of the vengeance of the fairies and goblins of the mountains than from anything else, for we were in the country which had long been to them an uncanny land.

Harkbir took charge of them and gave them

instructions how to build a hut, and when we promised the floor of our tent for a roof they soon got it completed, huddling in together like a lot of sheep. But they commenced to cry out again as the snow once more came sweeping around us. The evening certainly looked dreary and awful; and the rumble of falling avalanches booming in dull vibrations through the dark grey mist, was mingled with the low, moaning cry of the men who accompanied the prayer to Allah of one old man who stood up and faced the storm.

The heat of our bodies through our sleeping bags without the waterproof covering had melted the ice on which we were lying, and in consequence we found ourselves rather damp in the morning. It was still snowing when we were awakened by Rahim Ali with some hot tea, but it cleared for an hour or two, and I was able to get a sketch. I returned to the camp again just as Bruce and Zurbriggen arrived, having come down for food, as their supplies had run short.

All four of us were now crowded in one tent, and as we had all got everything warm we possessed on us, it made rather a close fit. We read and chatted and smoked till the

atmosphere was so thick one could cut it with a knife, and then we dined dimly by the light of a candle stuck on a lantern.

As soon as that function was over we arranged ourselves tightly for the night and sleep, if, indeed, sleep would come in such close quarters.

During the night it cleared up, and the snow-covered glacier sparkled and gleamed in the bright morning sunlight as Bruce and Zurbriggen started off to their high camp with fresh supplies. Then the snow commenced again.

Daily relays of coolies were sent to the *caches* to bring up supplies, and one party for firewood and sheep. They arrived two days after with no more than a handful each, having used it on the way to keep themselves warm; and as Rahim Ali had found the paraffin stove a comfort in his tent, he had burned it day and night, and used up all the oil.

We danced with rage on coming in from a hard day's work in a bitter cold wind to find this out, and we did not know which to commence on first. Eventually, however, five of the worst coolies were sent down with orders not to come back without full loads. After

going about a hundred yards across the ice they sat down, but skipped off quickly when I fired a revolver in their direction.

I was amused during this incident with the behaviour of the two sheep, a white one and a black one. They had been on the march up for two days without anything to eat, and I suppose, naturally enough expected something at the end. After prospecting round, and finding nothing softer than the firewood, which they tried to nibble, they consulted together and started for home, the white one leading, in the most determined manner. They had got well away before any one knew it, and to see those two sheep making a bee line for the Baltoro over the wide waste of snow, with a Balti coolie after them, was a most laughable sight; but back they were brought, and soon were mutton.

This day had been the best we had since our arrival here, and enabled us to get all the views we needed, so on the morrow we started for the Golden Throne and our companions who were on ahead. A fairly level and direct road up the glacier brought us to their tent. Our tents were erected at the very foot of the Golden Throne, amongst great boulders of rock, and the camp was named Footstool

Camp. This was to be our headquarters, from which an attempt was to be made on the peak. The weather had turned out most glorious. A bright, hot sun during the day was followed by a hard frost at night, so that we had every prospect of being successful.

CHAPTER IX.

PIONEER PEAK TO ASKOLE.

BRUCE and Zurbriggen had not been able, on account of bad weather, to find a way through the ice-fall, which had to be ascended to reach the arête leading to the top of the Golden Throne. So the morning after our arrival at Footstool Camp, they started off with two Gurkhas to make another attempt. Conway and I stayed in camp and wrote; I sketched, too, when the heat and a headache permitted. The climbing party returned after lunch, with the report of another failure; for the seracs were the worst that Zurbriggen had ever met with. The next day was spent assisting Conway at his survey. The heat was terrible, and our heads were so awful that every one was in a vile temper. However, in the evening I went out to make a sketch. I had hardly commenced before my paint-box was shooting for a crevasse and I after it;

luckily I caught it before it was beyond recovery, and started once more. I had got the subject sketched in and was floating on the first wash of colour, when it turned to lovely ice forms; before I had covered the paper the water I was painting with was a quarter of an inch thick in the cup. The result was very unsatisfactory. While in these regions I found it impossible to paint after the sun had sunk behind the hills, and as they were so very high, it was soon even-

ing. When the sun disappeared the temperature immediately dropped about one hundred degrees. In the sun the dazzle of the snow was terrible on the eyes, and we continually wore glasses. I had, of course, to take off mine when sketching, but I always felt the effects afterwards.

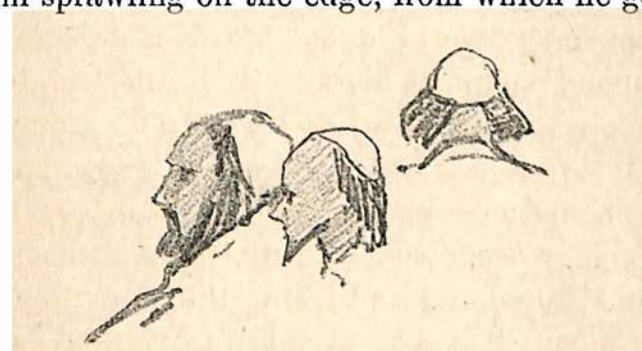
On August 21st we commenced the great ascent of the Golden Throne ice-fall, up which Zurbriggen had failed to find a way. We had to carry loads ourselves as the coolies were

utterly useless, nothing would tempt them to go with us; they had tried one on Bruce's first ascent, but at the first crevasse his knees gave way with fear and he was sent back.

We found the snow hard and in good condition, and soon reached the maze of *seracs* where Bruce and Zurbriggen were stopped on their ascent. Turning off in the direction opposite to that which Zurbriggen had tried, we found a way among great walls of ice and over snow-covered bridges spanning dark green gulfs of enormous depth. One of these bridges gave way with me while I was on it. Conway and Zurbriggen had got over all right, I was next on the rope and on the centre of the bridge, when suddenly, with a great crash, it went thundering down into the black depths far below. The rope attached to Harkbir, who was behind, allowed me to fall against the opposite wall of ice, where I hung suspended, my nose close up to its cold surface, and the wind all knocked out of me by the tightening of the rope round my chest. My companions stood firm while I reached up to the edge of the crevasse, and cleared away the overhanging snow, which tumbled down my neck and gave me cold shivers. Throwing my axe and hat up, I pulled myself up by the rope, and

getting a leg over the edge, was soon on firm ice again.

Harkbir had next to cross, so getting well away from the edge to the full length of the rope that attached us, I shouted to him to jump. My Hindustani was not of sufficient clearness to explain to him that when he was in the air I would haul him to safety. Nevertheless he jumped and my timely pull landed him sprawling on the edge, from which he got



up with his usual broad smile that wrinkled every muscle on his face in knobs like chestnuts. Bruce and the other Gurkhas who were behind found a new way over. Further on up this terrible jumble of cold death-traps, Zurbriggen saw a fine broad plateau of snow, leading to the foot of the arête which he tried to get to, but between us and the smooth surface was a badly-broken portion of the glacier, which fell, like a broad cascade to

the main ice-fall up which we were climbing in jagged seracs of enormous size, leaving great gaps between very insecurely bridged. Climbing the outer wall of a great ice cavern to get over this, Zurbriggen managed to crawl over the roof on his stomach, and Conway after him, without breaking through. I came next, but though I went as carefully as a cat, part of it gave way. At the same time Zurbriggen informed us it was impossible to go any further in that direction as there were difficulties in front we could not surmount. So we had to turn back again: and after a short consultation together we determined to make for a fairly broad platform of snow-covered ice near us, and camp there till next day, while Zurbriggen and the Gurkhas returned for the provisions which had been left lower down.

This night we were in a curious and hazardous situation, camped on a great serac which might move at any minute, and surrounded by crevasses seen and unseen. If any of us had to leave the tent, we were roped to some one else, and allowed to walk around like a tethered donkey.

Zurbriggen and the Gurkhas having returned with the provisions, we all settled

down to get what rest and sleep we could in such circumstances and after such toil.

Early the next morning Bruce and Zurbriggen found a way on to the upper plateau, and returned to us. Bruce and the Gurkhas went back to the main camp for further provisions and some articles necessary for our comfort in such a trying position, and were to return to us next day. After they had gone, Zurbriggen and I shouldered loads and made for the new camping ground. The whole way was dangerous, the ice bridges in many places were very frail, and in some cases fell just after we were off them, but we reached the place and left our loads, and returned to Conway. After our return a slight fall of snow occurred, and we lay and did nothing as we found that was the most comfortable occupation. For at this height, 18,200 feet, work that necessitated exertion of any kind, such as taking off one's boots, or even sitting up when we had been lying down, left us gasping like fish out of water.

Conway decided not to start till next day for the new camp. That night I had a horrible time with toothache, and felt quite unfit for any climbing next morning, but nevertheless we all loaded up with as much as we could

carry, and on reaching the place, Conway and I set up the tents while Zurbriggen and the two Gurkhas returned for the remainder of the baggage. Immediately our attention was withdrawn from the camp-fixing arrangements, it was directed to the fact that we had no sensation in our feet, so we both squatted down, and taking off our boots and stockings commenced rubbing our livid feet and toes with snow. It took about half an hour of this work to get them right again, gasping all the time for breath, though we didn't waste much in talking. Now and again one of us would say, "No, not yet," in answer to the other's question if he felt any sensation of life; but even so much talk was unnecessarily exhausting.

Zurbriggen soon returned, and shortly after Bruce, with Karbir and four coolies (whom he had with great difficulty persuaded to accompany him), and the dog, Pristi, appeared on the scene with many good things. We managed to make a cup of chocolate with the melted snow, on our little spirit stove, and I felt infinitely better afterwards. The coolies and Pristi were sent down again. It was frightfully hot in our tent, something over one hundred degrees, and headache made it-

self felt again. In the night it dropped to nine or ten degrees below freezing point.

Next morning Conway and I, with Zurbriggen and two Gurkhas, continued our way upwards to make another camp with one tent, leaving Bruce behind, who was not at all well after his exertion of the day before. The slope to the foot of the arête was of steep, hard, frozen snow, and with our climbing irons we were able to ascend without the labour of cutting steps. The effects of the air, or rather want of air, were felt still more at this height, which was now 20,000 feet. Again Conway's feet and mine were frost-bitten and had to be attended to, and the labour of rubbing here was simply terrible. None of us was able to do anything during the day; though Conway managed to write his diary by fits and starts. Zurbriggen and the Gurkhas descended for the rest of the food which we had been unable to carry up on the first journey. When Zurbriggen returned to us he too was dead beat and could not utter a word for some minutes.

He told us that Bruce and the Gurkhas would join us in the morning for the attack on the peak. I made a few pencil sketches in the evening; but very early we rolled ourselves up in our bags, being determined to get

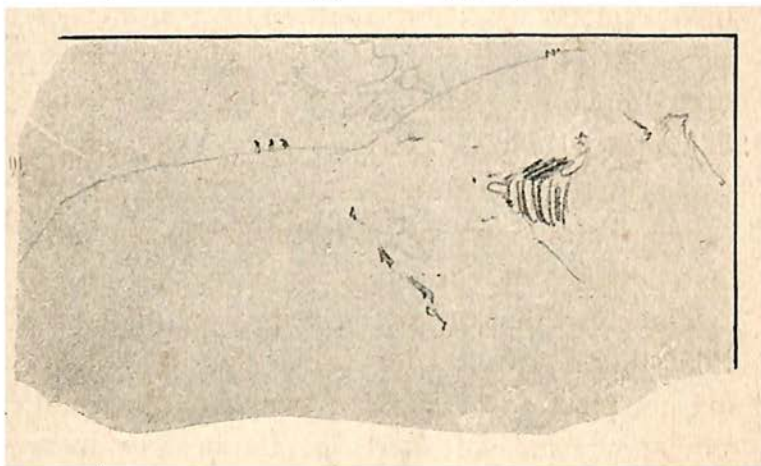
as much rest and sleep as possible. At about 2 a.m., however, Bruce and the Gurkhas were heard outside. They were greatly fatigued and frost-bitten, and as it was impossible for them to remain there, the thermometer standing at 16° Fahrenheit, the whole lot had to get into the tent. With seven inside such a small bit of canvas, it was utterly impossible for us to have any comfort at all. My toothache and headache were so bad that I determined to remain in camp and not take part in the great ascent, for fear of breaking down and spoiling the climb.

The party left at six o'clock, and I was alone and fortunately able to get some sleep. In the afternoon I made a sketch of a fine subject of snow and ice, looking across the main ice-fall to Kondus saddle, but my eyes were fearfully sore with the terrible glare of the sun on the snow, which fairly made my head reel. I devoted the remainder of the day to melting snow in the sun for my companions to drink when they returned.

About half past six in the evening I saw tiny little specks moving along the top of the white ridge, and then a confused flying mass of snow and men, for they had glissaded down the remaining slope to the near tent, and I

was soon congratulating them on the success which they had attained.

They had reached a peak measuring nearly 23,000 feet, the highest ever climbed, and had named it Pioneer Peak, but had not succeèded in reaching the top of the Golden Throne. Bruce and the Gurkhas went on down to their tents, and Conway, Zurbriggen, and I, were



left alone to sleep the nearest, I suppose, to heaven of any living creature on the earth. The greatest of our work had been done and no matter what lay before us, we knew it would be working homewards.

The two Gurkhas came up in the morning, and we each bundled up our belongings and slung them on our backs, the Gurkhas taking the tent and instruments. The slope down

to Bruce looked very enticing, so I sat down to glissade; but the frozen nature of it developed a speed I did not like, and the sight of a crevasse, for which I seemed to be making at rŭnaway speed, made it dawn on me that I had better put on a brake of some sort. Trying to do so with my axe resulted in turning me sideways, and my efforts to get into a correct position again only resulted in torn hands and clothes. I landed, a very mixed quantity, in a snow-heap near the dangerous hole. Harkbir tried the same game, with the same result; Zurbriggen, of course, came down in grand style on his feet, and Conway after him.

The terrible journey down from this to Footstool Camp I shall never forget, for we did not start until the sun was well up, when the snow was soft and the ice-bridges in a most rotten condition. We all had heavy loads, too; and, as some of the old bridges had fallen clean away, new ones had to be found. But with the camp before us as an object we were wildly reckless, and it was not long before we reached it. We scrambled over the stones to the tents, and dropped our bundles, which the cowardly and obsequious coolies ran to pick up. We were in a very

paradise. A *dak* had arrived from Askole, and brought letters from England and chickens from the village; Rahim Ali had the latter cooked, and soon we were each sitting on a rock with a hot chicken and a letter, happy, if ever men were happy. We slept—oh, how we did sleep that night!—although the thermometer registered 24° Fahr. inside the tent. After breakfast Zurbriggen and I went out gold-hunting. We saw some, but in quartz veins running in yellow threads, which we had no means of picking out. We turned from this seductive task, and spent the day idly making sketches and notes; and the next day, August 28th, we started, as we said, for home. The morning was grey and cloudy, but the glacier's surface was hard and crisp, and crackled under our feet in a way that reminded us of a frosty winter's day in England. A thin shower of snow drifted about us, and through it fitful gleams of sunlight shot across the glacier from some breaks in the clouds, picking out the wonderfully shaped seracs at the side, which for a moment were clear and distinct against the grey mist. But suddenly a hard, crisp snow came sweeping before the wind, cutting our faces till they bled, and making us rush for

the first stone we could find big enough for shelter. The cold was terrible, making our very marrow freeze. We camped near our old place at the junction of the glaciers.

The snowstorm continued all night, and in the morning the glacier was covered a foot deep, yet Rahim Ali managed to make us a cup of chocolate for breakfast, which comforted us greatly. Wrapped in all our warm

clothing, we awaited the sun, which came out in a couple of hours, and soon melted the greater part of the new snow, and enabled us to continue our way down.

Conway determined to keep to the left of the Baltoro on the return journey, to see if we could escape some of the terrible stone-hopping we had so suffered from on the way

up. We did escape a little of it this day after we turned the corner; but snow came on in the evening and made things very uncomfortable. The sunset effects, however, were so fine that, tired as I was, I contrived to get a sketch of its beautiful colour on misty mountains and grey glacier.

Pristi gave us greeting next morning by sticking his wet nose in the tent door, disclosing at the same time his snow-covered back, which told us it was snowing once more. It cleared off after breakfast, and we continued our way, unfortunately over the infernal stones again. Seeing some clear ice a little further on, we made for it; it was cut across at intervals by crevasses, bridged in many places by great boulders of rock, which saved us looking along the edge for a narrow place to jump. In crossing one a coolie tumbled in; his load jambed him in a narrow part about twelve feet down, and the excitement amongst his fellows was intense. Zurbriggen got him out with the rope, all right save for his fright, but he was an object of interest, not to say reverence, among the rest for a long time after. A little way further on, down a steep dip in the ice, some steps had been cut for us by Zurbriggen. We crossed

and sat down on the opposite height, watching the men coming on. These steps were as big as a staircase, cut at an angle across the face of the slope, but the first man that came to them planted his foot just at the side of the step instead of on it, and came rattling down, bundle and all. The incident was so laughable that everybody roared, and good humour was restored, and the coolies' fears allayed. We camped on the glacier in full view of Masherbrum (25,676 feet), across which the clouds moved lazily, "shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind."

It was Conway's intention to ascend the Stachikyungme glacier and cross by the Masherbrum pass at the head of it, and so reach Scardu by Kapilu, instead of returning by Askole; so our next march was for the corner of the Stachikyungme glacier. Leaving the stony surface of the Baltoro, we were soon on the clear ice of this side glacier, passing a great lake at the junction of the two, on which some sort of duck were slowly moving about; they were probably as surprised at seeing us as we were to see them in this Arctic place. Of course there wasn't a gun in the party, much to our regret, as they would have been a very acceptable

variation to the usual dull monotony of our commissariat department.

A steep, grass-covered moraine was the desired camping ground, and climbing its delightful slopes we sighed with a pleasure long denied us, for it was the first grass we had touched since we entered on the hated Baltoro. There was a lot of small shrub for fire, and some flowers enhanced our delight with their hues. The hill was so steep that it was utterly impossible to set up the tents on this side, and the other side was sheer precipice, so a platform had to be cut on the top. They were erected in this exposed position, and as the wind was rising we expected some trouble. We were not mistaken, for the tent, being broadside on it, got the full force of the wind during the night, and the guy ropes parted; then the ridge rope slipped off the rock it was fastened to, and Conway and I were left standing, holding up the tent to keep it from smothering us, shouting meanwhile for some one to get hold outside. At last one of the Gurkhas fixed us up again. But, with several alarms like this during the night, sleep was at a discount.

Bruce arranged to leave us here and make for Abbottabad, so we had a busy day writing

letters and packing up the collections and such stores as we should not require any further. These were sent off to Scardu. Bruce bade us good-bye at 2.30 p.m., and, accompanied by Parbir and Amar Sing, started on his way; but not long after he left a coolie returned with a note to say that he had met with an accident which, though not serious, would prevent his moving for a couple of days.

During the morning the coolies, under Harkbir and Karbir's superintendence, had cut out a platform on the lee side of the hill and re-erected our tents, so that we were in a more comfortable position; and in the evening Zurbriggen ascended the ridge above our camp and reported the presence of a herd of ibex. The absence of rifles prevented any enthusiasm to go hunting. But I thought of Jack, the hunter, who was now in Srinagar.

The next morning Zurbriggen went up the Stachikyungme glacier on a tour of inspection. On his return he reported that it was utterly hopeless to think of getting the coolies over. So our plans were changed again, and we had to return to Askole the way we came up. On this being reported to the coolies their delight was unbounded, and was added

to by the payment of their month's wages, which had been kept back to prevent them bolting when we thought of crossing the Masherbrum pass.

Rahim Ali on pay day was in his element, and was a most important man both to himself and to the coolies. It was amusing to watch this long, lanky figure, surmounted with an immaculate white turban, seating them in a row along the top of the hill above us. When this was all arranged he marched along in front of them, paying them their wages, and giving each and all lordly admonition.

It was a great disappointment to Conway—and to me, for that matter—to have to give up this route. The old road that lay before us, and up which we had toiled so laboriously, and over which we had now to return, may have had something to do with my regret, for I shivered in anticipation of its dreaded stones. But when we bundled up in the morning it was with firm determination to get off its surface that day. We started at 6.15 a.m., and, crossing the clear ice of the Stachikyungme glacier, we entered on our purgatory, and soon reached Bruce, who was lying with a strained back and sprained ankle under the shelter of a stone wall which the

Gurkhas had built for him. He said that he expected to be able to catch us up at Askole, and in the expectation of his doing so we went on our way, leaving him a small tent and provisions. However, it was a fortnight before he recovered. This was a very unfortunate incident, and it was extremely difficult to know what to do—whether to stay or go on. But camping there would have meant the loss of very valuable time, and expense,

and yet going on seemed selfish. It is one of those things bound to happen in such expeditions, and one must reckon on them and take one's chance, just as one must look for tumbles, the risk of a crevasse or a broken rope on the ice. Bruce, I think, understood the situation, and bore it as he did everything else. But we all deeply regretted leaving him, though he had his faithful and affectionate Gurkhas to look after his wants.

Toiling on to noon in agony unspeakable

over the damnable stones, we had lunch and a smoke, and an hour's sleep, curled up on rocky couches; then on again for an eternity. At last we stood on the snout of the horror, and saw the fires in the grey of night among the trees of our old Baltoro camp.

The coolies must have gone before us like goats. But then they were going home. With a mad, wild rush down the stony slope—men, rocks, and dust together—we, too, were on the level bank of the river, and soon stretched out our weary bodies on the floor of our tents; beneath us was luxuriously soft grass.

Every bone in our bodies ached next morning from the terrible day before, but we started with the determination of doing another record march. We knew what lay before us, but we put away the remembrance, and left the day to take care of itself.

The river had fallen considerably since our march up, and we could walk over the bed of it, which saved us the most terrible of the scrambling over loose sand shoots. We passed our old camping ground at Bardumal, and a little further on we had to take to the bank once more, and that terrible ribbed fan. Up and down, up and down—would it never end?

At last we had climbed the last final rib, and, lying down, I felt as if I could never get up again. But Conway would not stop here. The coolies, who had been going like racers before us, now began to lag behind. On reaching the corner of the Punmah valley, leading to the rope bridge, I was dead beat, and the coolies were only making spasmodic spurts, resting every hundred yards. Conway would not camp, though I thought it a very good place, with both wood and water; so, throwing myself down, I said I would sleep there and join them in the morning. My feet were in an awful state, and when Zurbriggen came back, about fifteen minutes after, to say that they had camped a little further on, I had no wish to move, so great was the relief to be off my feet. I managed, however, to reach the tents, and then Conway explained to me the reasons of this enforced work. He wanted to reach Scardu, where the first telegraph station was, to telegraph home, as he had news in the letters he had received of a report in the Indian papers giving an account of the loss of the whole party, and he was afraid of it reaching England.

I suggested that we ought to be lost like other expeditions, and have relief parties sent

to look for us, but he told me laughingly that he had forgotten to make arrangements for this before he left England.

He had wanted to make a march this day long enough to enable us to reach Askole the next. If he had only told us what he wanted, I was prepared to go to Scardu without a stop. At any rate we were going to reach Askole next day, though the distance had occupied us two days and a half on the way up.

We rose very early the next morning, and packed all the clothes we could possibly do without in the baggage. We instructed the men that they were to reach Askole that day, and they gave vent to whatever enthusiasm they were capable of showing at the prospect of reaching home. They started off with everything with them, food and bedding, so that nothing was left for us but to get there that night.

We had a last look round from "Dreary Camp," and gave a farewell salute to hoary-headed Mango Gusor, which somehow just then seemed to me conscious of the human ants below him. Perhaps I had got infected with the natives' notion of goblins and fairies, and had grown fetichistic too. There were only Conway and I, Zurbriggen and the two

Gurkhas, and Pristi left, for the men had gone on some time before. A silence fell upon us; we were leaving a country we should never see again, and we seemed to have spent a life in it. I started off alone, for Conway was finishing up his notes, and reached the gully formed by the torrent that had given us so much trouble to cross on our way up. The bottom was now filled with a dry mass of rocks, amongst which a little stream bubbled and sparkled. Climbing down and up the other side, I reached the walled enclosure the coolies had built for a shelter, and looking over, I was startled to see the form of what seemed a dead man, with his chest and legs bare. He was stretched full length on his back, his arms spread out, and with his partially opened and dry-lipped mouth, and his eyes staring up into the sun, he seemed like a dried mummy. A wooden bowl with a little water stood at his side; he was very ghastly-looking.

I could get no word out of him, and though his lips moved now as if in speech, no sound issued in answer to my questions. Conway and the rest coming up, we managed to get him to look alive; he had been one of the party sent on to Askole, and falling ill,

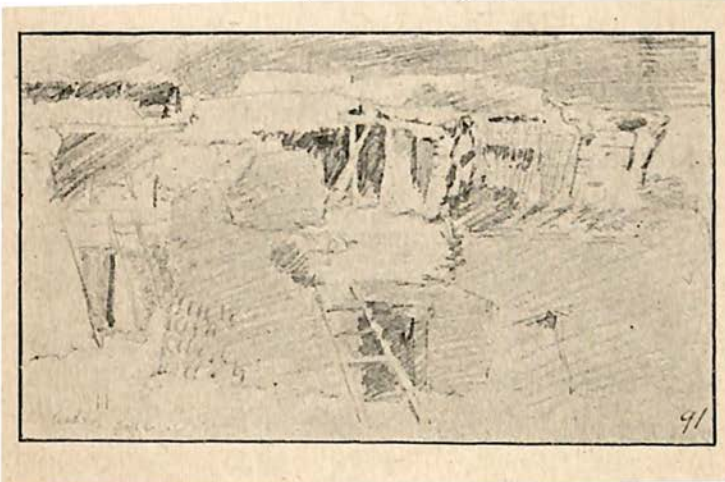
his companions being unable to carry him there—let alone over the rope bridge—had left him. We could do nothing except drag him into the shade, and supply him with food and water, and get on to Askole as quickly as possible to send help back.

It was the only sad incident on our expedition.

He looked an outcast, far away from the habitations of man in the midst of overpowering immensities. What a subject, I thought, for a picture! For the death of Cain perhaps.

On leaving him we crossed the rope bridge, and kept along the bank to the mouth of the river, instead of crossing the high ridge. At the corner we had to climb up the mighty glacier-worn rock face that descended straight into the river: this could only be managed by clambering up great fissures, in which steps had been artificially made here and there by placing loose stones in the cracks. But the smooth rock face had to be traversed, and at one place it was very dangerous. A corner round which we had to turn was quite smooth. Zurbriggen got round first, and I came next, hugging the rock high up with the palms of my hands as flat as I could get them,

I placed my body against it and curled my leg round, and slid down and round, to a little step I could not see, into which Zurbriggen placed the toe of my boot; it would have about held a shilling lying flat. The drop straight down was about three hundred feet. From there it was easy to get on to a larger surface. The party following got round the



same way, and the rest of the traverse was comparatively without risk. We got finally to an easy slope, and chasing butterflies on the way, reached the bed of the river, and soon were at Korofon camping-ground, resting under the shade of its great rock. We had lunch and again proceeded, and, turning the corner of the Biafo glacier without having to wade this time, we passed the great buttress

that divides its flow and entered on the desert of the Askole valley, scrambling up the last part. From the top we saw the fields in the distance, and the sight brought renewed vigour to our tired limbs, and on we went.

At last we came to fields of waving grain almost ripe for harvest, and passing on through a tree-bordered lane we entered the village and were surrounded by the natives and greeted by the old Lambadhar with hearty welcome; the tents were up in the old place amongst the shady trees, and we entered on bliss unspeakable.

CHAPTER X.

ASKOLE TO SCARDU.

WE did not forget the poor coolie left in the mountains, and the Lambadhar sent off help for him. We heard afterwards that he was brought back all right.

We remained the next day at Askole in hopes of Bruce joining us, as well as for a much-needed rest after our toil, but as I said it was some time before he could travel. Our road now lay south to Scardu, through the Shigar valley, and we had only one more snow pass to cross, the Scora La (17,320 feet), after that it was downhill through the green valleys and orchard groves of Shigar. How our mouths watered at the thought of ripe apricots, melons, and fresh juicy fruit! There was no loitering amongst us. The poor natives were rather reluctant to leave their homes, but the rupees, and what they could buy with them, overcame their scruples,

and with hearty farewells to the simple kindly folk who had so helped us, we started on our way.

We had to cross one more rope bridge, and it was the longest we had gone over yet. It swayed in the wind over the tumbling torrent of the Askole river. Conway and I went over at once, and sat on the high bank to see our loads being carried across. I watched the men's faces through my glasses as they slowly moved over the swaying bridge. Two only were allowed on at a time, and they kept close together. They would all have got on at once if they had been allowed, for a Balti always likes company in danger.

As luck would have it, our coolies carrying Conway's bundle, containing all his precious diaries, and mine with my sketches, both got on the bridge together. We knew if one fell, the other would go with him. How we strained, looking through the glasses! "They're sure to fall," Conway said, sadly anticipating black fate.

"Hallo! there goes my bundle!" I shouted, as my coolie gave a lurch over, but he straightened himself again, and said something to his companion, and they stopped. Then on once more.

"He's gone!" Conway shouted, as his coolie missed a step.

The fear on the men's faces was a study, but they reached the up slope of the bridge, and a native went down to give them a hand at the end; and we breathed at last. I believe we held our breath the whole time they were crossing, and I was bathed in perspira-

tion. Conway offered up a pious "thank God! there are no more of those horrible bridges."

It took an hour and a half for the men to cross, and after a short rest we went swinging along through the fields, and up the hill to the little village of Mongjong. There the Askole band met us, and went blowing and thumping before us for two hours, till we

reached Thala Brok, a collection of loosely built stone huts, used by the villagers in the summer, when their sheep and goats are on the high pastures. Getting away from its evil-smelling vicinity, we had our lunch while the band played, and the natives sat around on the rocks above us. After lunch they indulged in a grand *nautch*, as the best parting honour they could show us.

An hour's walk, by a well-marked track through wild rugged scenery, brought us to a pleasant green *maidan*, where the camp was already fixed. Ahead of it a great black stone fan, which ran in a straight line at an easy angle across the horizon, cut the base off the snow peaks of the pass, which towered above in a grey mist. It was blowing horribly and was very cold, and no object of great interest was in view. We kept to our tents. From mine I made a sketch of the well-muffled coolies bringing in firewood, and another of the golden glow on the peak above the pass as the sun set.

We were all so mad to get to the land of flowers and fruit and good things—the pleasant land of Shigar—that we did another record march to Scora next day. Heavy clouds hung over the peaks above the pass,

and mists swept up like smoke from the south side, holding out every prospect of a cold climb. We started at 8 a.m. The coolies had been sent on in advance, striking out over the moraine to the white ice. I was feeling not at all well, and so plodded along by myself, going steadily, with very little interest in my cold surroundings. But I took the crevasses at a jump and caught up the coolies, and, leaving them, soon after came in sight of the pass. It looks like the lower jaw of a great skull, with the front teeth broken out. A cold damp mist puffed up from below between the broken stumps, and it was so freezing cold, that it made me take shelter under one of them till the party arrived, when they all huddled in separate shelters. I waited for a servant to bring me something to eat, as I thought we were to have lunch here. I waited some time, and no one turning up with the expected food, I got out of my hole to see what they were doing. But not a soul was in sight. Climbing up to the gap of the pass, I was in time to see the tail end of the line of coolies disappearing in the mist below. The cold wind cut like a knife in my exposed position, so I speedily got down out of the draught, and

went after them. There was not a patch of snow or ice on this side of the mountain, though some old avalanche snow lay far down in the bed of the *couloir*, and a well-marked path traversed the ridges on this face of the mountain in zigzags. It was not

bad going, and at last we stood in the bed of the Scora valley, and a few hundred yards further, in an old grass-covered enclosure, I got hold of something to eat.

We crossed the narrow river here in a regular Scotch rain, and were soaking wet

in no time. We clambered up higher and higher, by a path which led through trees and over grassy slopes, the only means of getting past the steep rocky gorge through which the river ran. Then we went down steep zigzags to the river-bed again, to a regular rock cañon, and high above us great and curious water-worn projections of rock stuck out from the face. We rolled big rocks into the river to make steps across, and reached the other side; a little further along we had to cross once more. This sort of travelling continued till we reached a well-worn camping-ground under some trees, where we intended to stop, and were preparing to camp, when Rahim Ali informed us that Scora was not much further on at the entrance to the Shigar valley; and we decided to reach it.

We had more river crossing, which was now becoming rather wearisome. Its stream had widened with the spread of the valley as it neared its junction, and the character of the mountains entirely changed. Our ideas as to heights were all curiously wrong after the great mountains we had left. Conway and I only noticed this when I remarked, on seeing a green patch at the angle of the valley with some dark objects moving over it, that it was

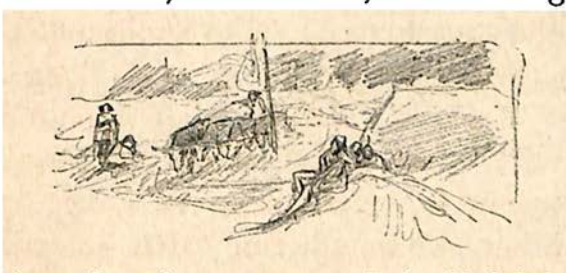
Shigar, and that there were some goats feeding, for we found that the place was no distance from us, and that the goats were cows, so used had we become to the immense size of the mountains we had left.

The weary march at last was at an end. The glow died out of the clouds that had lit the last mile of it with rosy colour, and under the waving green branches of some fruit trees on the soft green turf by the bank of a rippling brook we lay in absolute content.

In the morning the sun was shining gloriously through the fruit trees. The little village of Scora, with its small wood-framed and wattle-walled houses, looked very frail and primitive. Natives were gossiping to each other, children driving cattle, and women watching the sahibs. We were as great an excitement to them as a circus passing through some country village at home.

Crossing over the Scora river once more we entered a very Garden of Eden. The broad valley of Shigar spread out far away into the deep blue shadows of the distant surrounding hills, and long avenues of trees shaded a broad road, wide enough for driving. The fields were yellow with harvest, and the natives busy reaping it, making quaint pictures in

their curious picturesque garments. Oxen were treading out the grain, marching in a circle, tied to great posts erected in the centre of the grain spread out below them. They were yoked close together, and their heads were bent down with the heavy timber yoke. This black mass of cattle with great blue lights on their sweating backs made a beautiful picture in the midst of the golden straw and dust haze. A nearly naked brown-skinned native, with a stick, was beating and



pushing, shouting "gee up" in Balti to the outside beasts to make them keep up with the shorter steps of the inner ones. A group of native children tossing about in the straw in the foreground, with their father lounging and looking on, completed the picture.

The curious sensation of freedom we experienced as we gaily swung along the broad road, with a clear blue sky above flaked with pure light-rimmed white clouds, was delightful. The great masses of shady trees, and

the long poplar-lined avenue runged like a ladder with the thin shadows of their trunks; the birds singing gaily, the sheep and cattle grazing, and the villagers at their harvest-work, all made melody in our hearts after our restraints and trials in the world's cold solitudes.

We passed through many little villages nestled amongst shady fruit trees, with gardens of beautiful flowers, and rested at Segong, where the Lambadhar regaled us with grapes and apricots, and we drank of the sparkling stream at our feet. We visited and admired the little mosques, most of them beautifully proportioned and admirably built, and journeying on we entered the chief village of Shigar. Passing through its little bazaar of small shops, and then crossing a river, which descends from a rocky *nala*, we reached the broad polo-ground, and underneath some great chinar trees found our men awaiting us.

We intended continuing our journey to Scardu this day by means of a skin raft called a *zuk* down the Shigar river to the Indus, while the coolies went by road; but that new experience was reserved till to-morrow, as we were fascinated with the beautiful place and the ripe fruit, and all the good things that

abounded in plenty around us. Each of us were soon in the midst of a melon that was big enough for a tub, and juicy enough to swim in. Merchants came with their beautiful, soft, snowy webs of *Pashmina*, and though we did not buy, we enjoyed the sensation of shopping as much as a woman in Regent Street. The novelty of seeing anything in the nature of a shop was so strange. They soon left, and I went out sketching.

What a change of subject from the ice and snows to white-flowered fields, through which walked natives in yellow, blue, and white muslin robes! In the background were rich dark green trees, and, under them, white-walled and dark-timbered houses, beautiful to look on and to sketch.

Next morning, after the baggage had been sent off to Scardu, we wandered, in the cool shadow of hills cast right across the valley by the rising sun, down through fields of grain, and past busy farmyards to the sandy beds of the river on which was lying a collection of blown-out sheepskins lashed to a lot of very thin poles. Five bare-legged natives were busy completing the construction of the raft. One was lying down by the bladders blowing into the hind legs and filling the skins with

wind, deftly tying each, as he finished, with a bit of fresh bark, pieces of which he kept stuck in the scarf round his waist. Zurbriggen looked with rather a rueful countenance on the conveyance that was to take us down the tumbling river. I remarked to him that we might catch up the coolies yet, but the experience was too novel a one to be missed, so we resigned ourselves to fate, and the crew got their strange craft in working order. Turning it over into the water, with the framework uppermost, it was at once afloat. There were thirty skins, and five of the crew, and five passengers, and the dog. We squatted between each other's legs in a row down the middle. There was no bow or stern to the craft, but that didn't matter, as we found out afterwards. The crew divided themselves on either side, and pushed off. They had each a stick like a clothes-prop, without the fork, which they used as paddles. Why they had no paddles I do not know, as one touch of a paddle would be equal to thirty strokes of the stick they used. But perhaps the poles in such navigation were better for several purposes.

The water was smooth for a considerable way after we started, and we simply went with the stream, no movement being percep-

tible, save the flying banks rushing past, and the distant hills doing a right and left wheel. Suddenly the man on the look-out saw breakers ahead, and there was a jabbering of orders and remarks, and swearing, I suppose, for we could not understand a word, and every man began backing water for dear life. Soon we were in the breakers, and the raft swirled round, the water splashed and bubbled up between our legs, and we held on for all we knew, and swore deep at the wetting. The dog never uttered a howl, but looked like the picture of a martyr at the stake. Again and again the raft swirled round as the water broke over some fall in the bottom, then rushed off at great speed anyhow and everyhow, so we never knew which end was going to be foremost.

Once we grounded on a shallow, and the bladders had to be dragged over the pebbly bottom, till I thought they would be torn to pieces, and we should be left in the middle of the river, but we got off safely. However, all the time we were going, first one and then another bladder would get flabby from the air escaping, and one of the crew would flop down and blow it up again. The novelty of the journey and the swiftness of it were rather

discounted by its uncertainty. The crew guided the raft over to the left bank as we neared the junction with the Indus, and there we landed, while the men got the raft out of the water, and carrying it on their shoulders by the four corners, marched across the sandy promontory to the bank of the Indus, which we had to cross, and getting afloat again, towed us further up, past a very nasty piece of quicksand into which they sank leg-deep. At a bend in the river our men got on board, and the river carried us over to the other side in a rather desolate waste. We paid them off, and the crew dismantled ship by letting the wind out of the skins. Tying them up in bundles, they prepared for their march back to Shigar, while we turned towards the road leading to Scardu. Here there seemed to be two ways round a great rock bluff, which stood at the junction of the rivers. Seeing a fort perched up on the left-hand ridge, we made our way towards it, and found a good path leading up and round it, and shortly after entered the narrow street of houses. On the roofs some natives were busy winnowing grain by throwing it into the air, and letting the wind drive the chaff off, the grain falling back on the heap.

The houses were scattered in groups over a broad valley, surrounded by big bare hills, and making our way at once to the post-office, pointed out to us by a native, Conway telegraphed home the news of our success. We demanded our letters, and the Kashmiri postmaster in charge pointed to some post-bags which we emptied out on the sandy floor. I thought there should be some more for me, and ransacked the place, finding one in an old tool box. There was also a great parcel of tobacco sent by Jack, who was now at Srinagar.

After this we made our way through an avenue of trees, and along a dusty road, over a high bank above the river bed to the well-built house of the Tehsildar or Governor, who received us heartily, surrounded by a squatting retinue of white-turbaned Kashmiri clerks. Some rooms were placed at our disposal, and getting out our baggage, which was stored here, we made a sort of scratch meal, while we waited for our coolies to come in. As we were sitting wiling away the time writing, a message was sent from the Rajah, inviting us to a polo-match, and Conway, who had arrears of writing to make up, deputed me as representative to attend.

I was not in costume to visit kings, nevertheless I went off. Rahim Ali, to give dignity to the Sahib on whom he attended, instructed some natives to attach themselves to me, as no one is of any importance in the country who has not a number of followers of some sort. Going through a row of gaily caparisoned horses held by servants, I reached the Rajah's pavilion overlooking the polo-ground, where he sat on rich carpets. He was a venerable-looking old man, surrounded by a gorgeously attired court, the greater nobles being seated on the carpet with him, while the lesser stood on steps at the back. They all rose at my arrival, and salaamed, and I did the same. A chair was placed for me alongside his Rajahship. But the old man did not know a word of Hindustani, so that I was completely stumped. He smiled, and I grinned back at him, but that was the extent of our conversation, till some one got enough words together to explain to me that the Governor was coming, and that he would interpret. Shortly after he clattered up on a pony with a great retinue, and they received him with much honour. Was he not the representative of the race that had conquered them, and now I suppose ground them down with taxes? It

was a sorrowful sight to see the fine old royal-looking face of the descendant of the ancient rulers of the land bowed before the Kashmiri Governor, fat, sleek, and proud.

While waiting for us the polo players were seated in a semicircle on the ground, all dressed in white, while behind each his horse stood, held by a servant; an attendant handed round a large silver water-pipe, from which each took a puff. The whole scene was lighted up with a great crimson glow from the setting sun, and the effect and colour were wonderful. I explained to the old king through the Governor why Conway was unable to come. But the scene was one I knew he would not like to miss, and as the old Rajah looked disappointed at not seeing Conway, I said I should write a letter, and he would come. Scribbling a note, a servant was sent off with it. In the meantime the game might commence. The players got up, and giving to the attendant the white scarves they had around them, mounted their ponies, and began to play. It was a wild and very fast game, but my interest in it was swallowed up in the glory of the picture in the gorgeous sunset.

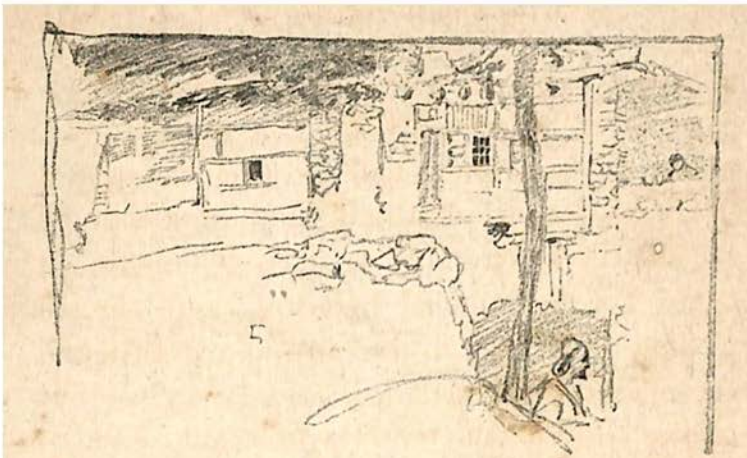
Conway arrived, and was delighted with it.

We returned to our house and spread our beds on *charpois*, and felt a sense of civilised existence about us.

We employed all the next morning writing letters, and after lunch I went out, taking Karbir with me to explore the valley for subjects. There were many little bits of beautiful colour in and about the different groups of quaint houses, and with the unusual costume of the natives, these were very attractive to sketch. But the grand view up the Indus valley overpowered all this mere prettiness. A great sweep of river, and broad banks of sand with a great grey-brown background of rock mountains, made a splendid composition even when it was not lighted up with the red glow of the setting sun and the long deep purple shadows creeping up the valley. But it was loveliest when the last streak of sunset gold was gone, and the valley was grey, that wonderful grey that makes a painter's heart ache for its infinite subtlety, its fleeting charm and impossibility of satisfactory treatment.

The next day was so fearfully hot that I remained in the *bangla*. As there were plenty of subjects in the courtyard, I could sit in the cool shade of the house and sketch

the life and movement around me. The coolies who were to take the greater part of the baggage to Srinagar direct, gathered around, but Conway was unable to get the governor to change a cheque. This caused much trouble and telegraphing, and not till next day was the matter arranged. Then they were sent off, and we started on our journey to the land of Buddha.



CHAPTER XI.

SCARDU TO LEH.

THE trip to Leh in Ladak, or Little Thibet, was undertaken principally for the opportunity of comparing barometer readings at the observatory there with the ones taken on our journey; but the chance of seeing that curious land of mystery and its fantastic people was a great element in causing our deflection from the road southwards and homewards.

The necessary rupees being at last provided by the Tehsildar, the main baggage was sent off to Srinagar by the Deosai plain.

We mounted the ponies provided for our march, and a wilder-looking or more raggedly equipped lot of animals it would be difficult

to find anywhere. The saddles were the high pommelled ones used by the natives, but nearly all the stuffing had fled from them, and the bare boards of which they were formed caused us unutterable agony. The animals could not be induced to go at more than a walking pace, and in Indian file, even though the road at the start was broad enough. The ponies knew that it would soon become narrow, and I suppose thought it was no good getting too familiar at the start, for friendships formed would have to be broken, and there was no use beginning them. Each had led a lonely life from the day he was able to carry a load or a man, and the tails of his companions were the only parts of them he had studied, and he knew the usefulness of his front rank's tail when the flies were troublesome.

Conway, Zurbriggen, and myself alone were mounted. Rahim Ali and the two Gurkhas took charge of the coolies.

It was a delightful change, until we got sore, to have some other legs doing the work of one's own, giving us opportunity to look about instead of having to watch each foot-step, as we had done for so many months in the mountains.

Our first day's march was up the broad

valley of Scardu by a great wide road, and for half the time we had a straight avenue of trees. Further on the valley narrowed, and it became mere desert of rock and sand, making us thankful that it was on the back of an animal we were travelling instead of ploughing on foot through the red dust. Riding along over a rock *parri*, up which a sort of staircase is formed, and under and through the fort-like house which stands on the road, we passed a village with stone-covered fields, and reached Thurgon. There we rode through a regular farmyard, where harvesting operations were in full swing, and reaching the Bagh, where we were to camp, we sat down in the hollow of a dry irrigation channel on the top of a dyke. There we dangled our legs, waiting for the coolies, who did not turn up for nearly two hours. In the meantime we discovered a coolness about our seat that seemed very refreshing, till we discovered that the water had been turned on and that we were sitting in it blocking the channel. The native who wished to irrigate his crops, and wondering, I suppose, why no water reached them after turning it on, followed the lead of the channel up to find out the cause of the obstruction, and discovering

what dreadful thing he had done to the Sahibs, "scooted" for all he knew.

Wandering down to the bank of the Indus over the rocks and stones, to sketch a dark fiery sunset that lit up the grey waters of the river tumbling over some great rocks, I discovered that another artist must have been there before me, for numerous pictures of ibex with tremendous horns and very attenuated legs and body had been cut on the stone. The carvings seemed of great age, and the artist was unknown—at any rate to the people of the village. Perhaps he was some hunter, waiting in days long gone for the animals he depicted to come to the river to drink, who wiled away his time scraping with a spoiled arrow head these pictures of the great beasts he hoped to shoot.

We left Thurgon at eight o'clock on the same ponies, and for four hours it was an utter desert waste of sand and rocks, in which we climbed up high *parris* by wonderfully constructed roads. But we had no water and the sun burned overhead. We could hear the maddening sound of the river far below, which was added torture to thirsty travellers' sand-choked throats. But at last we stayed to eat at Gol under the shady trees, and there we

could get something to drink. The oases of villages in this barren land are the most wonderfully contrived feats of cultivation imaginable. For as one is riding along the sandy wastes with not a shrub or the semblance of one in sight, for the only crop nature yields is great rusty-coloured, water-worn rocks of the most wonderful shapes, and while one is wondering how these were formed, and how on earth they got a thousand feet above the river-bed, of a sudden the pony is scrambling up through fruit trees and splashing through water. The sensation was delightful; the surprise perfect.

At Gol we changed coolies and ponies, and Conway and I went on ahead. Another series of high *parris* had now to be traversed; but our nerves were not good enough to ride over the worst parts of loose, flat stones laid on apparently very rotten sticks stuck in the cracks of the rock face. The animals scramble over in the most marvellous manner, though their legs often go through as they step on the edge of some stone and tip it over.

Zurbriggen, whom we had left behind tying his broken saddle on the animal he had selected, told us when he reached us that it was a brute. When he stopped to let it drink

at a pool shortly after leaving Gol, the saddle and he went sliding over the pony's head into the water. I am sorry I missed that.

At the junction of the Shyok and the Indus we turned the corner and mounted to the top of another high *parri*, whence we had a splendid view of the cañon-like gorge of the Indus. Descending again to the sandy wastes we reached Sermi, a village with sparkling streams and bright green fields, and passing through

it into the desert, we came to an imposing avenue of poplars, with a walled enclosure, which seemed to lead nowhere. It looked as if somebody had been going to start a house there, and after building a gateway and planting an avenue, his money had run out. Our ponies ambled along through another waste of sand, and we reached the outskirts of Parkutta. Leaving our animals for Zurbriggen and Rahim Ali, we walked up to Parkutta itself, most

beautifully situated on the top of white rocks. We reached the Bagh at seven o'clock, and awaited the coolies, who did not arrive till long after dark. We had been eleven hours on horseback and were very sore.

We had another set of ponies next morning, of the same class and comfort, and the road presented the same rugged features. We passed through thriving little villages surrounded by green fields on broad sloping fans, where the houses were built of wicker, stone, and mud walls, over more high *parris* above the river that wound about the base of the steep sides. The water was a dark silver grey, harmonising beautifully with the yellow, brown, and purple of the rocks, which were lit up with the sun, the sweeping clouds painting the hill-sides in great purple shadows.

Reaching Tolti, which boasts of a Rajah and palace of sorts, our camp was pitched on a platform above a little tributary of the river, close to the houses. The smell was abominable. We had a visit from His ragged Highness and promised to photograph him in the morning, he was so interested in the camera.

I was not feeling very well, and leaving the dirty place, I took my sketching materials and went out into the beautiful fields, and sitting

on the high bank above the river, I dreamed away the sunny hours. Returning to camp I found every one asleep.

Tolti provided the worst-looking lot of animals we had had yet, but they turned out much better than we expected, seeing the nature of the road we had to travel over. The banks of the gorge being precipitous, it had been found impossible to make a road of any sort along it.

The Rajah turned up in the morning dressed in his very best Sunday suit, with a fine *tulwar*, which I much wished to take from him, and he posed with his wazier on a seat beneath the chinar trees and looked like a wooden image; of course he wanted his picture there and then, but Conway informed him it would have to go to London first. I believe he thought the whole business a fraud.

The ponies were no use the first part of the way, the road was so steep, so we climbed up the high *parri* on foot, one thousand feet above the river. It was the same old road, in which the climbing was never done, that we were so sick and tired of. The coolies lagged behind, at which I don't wonder, and we were vexed as we waited in hungry impatience for them

to arrive. At this place, Khurmang, a company of Kashmiri Sepoys was encamped, and we saw the little groups of soldiers cooking their food under shelter of the great boulders with which the ground was covered—for they do not appear to have tents. One lot was boiling water, and another group, having evidently stolen a goat somewhere—(I'm sure they never bought it)—were toasting it whole over a fire. A couple of men turned it round and round, scraping the singed hair off as the flames licked it, while others, muffled up like Indian idols, sat on the tops of the great rocks waiting for the feed. The coolies who had carried the baggage were squabbling and fighting—no, not fighting, they couldn't do that, but the nearest to it—over their pay. The little fires burning and the blue smoke curving and floating across the dark recesses of the gorge made a very picturesque scene at night.

We had very giddy work the next day, for the *parris* were simply terrible-looking. They were steep, perpendicular walls, hundreds of feet high, and along the top, close on the very edge, the road tumbled unevenly over smooth flat rocks, up loose staircases of stone, and, reaching a corner where the cliff shot up

straight and perpendicular far above, a terrace commenced. A great crack in the rock had evidently suggested a means of getting round, and the natives had simply stuck small trunks of trees in it horizontally at intervals, bridging the spaces with flat, loose stones. I had ridden roads before this that would have made my fortune in a circus, but this was a little too much to expect of me, so I got off and let my pony find his way around as best he might, and away he scrambled. I stood at one corner to make a note, and then followed. The rough gallery wound along, taking advantage of every crack in the face of the cliff, and all the way round this great face of rock we could see the sweeping grey river far down below, through the holes in the road. This gallery, I believe, was nearly half a mile long.

At Parkutta we stopped for lunch. The coolies did not arrive for hours, and Rahim Ali was ill, so that we remained the night there. The river-bed by which we camped was a great sweep of dry, shifting sand, which got into my paint and water, so that sketching was impossible. I was glad of the excuse for a good long sleep, which had been denied me the two previous nights.

Next morning we had to climb straight up

from camp and over the hills above. The path was fairly good, except for the constant ups and downs. Only once did we descend as low as the river, and then it was up and up and round again. When we left the Indus for the Dras valley we had the same desert of rock and sand, with here and there a patch of cultivation and its complement of huts. Arriving at Oldingthang, we camped on the roof of the *Serai*, or Rest House, which it boasts of, and had the luxury of a *charpoi* to sleep on. Heavy rain came on shortly after we arrived and washed the dust off the trees and brightened up the landscape.

We had a long, weary march next day. Starting at seven a.m. we found that there was not so much climbing, the path keeping low down through a very desert. It gave me a very clear idea of the miseries of the Sahara without water. We turned away at the junction of the Dras and Suru rivers, and keeping along the left bank of the Dras, reached the village and Bagh of Hardas, where the natives made the time lively for us with a band and dancing. We lunched, while the flies did the same off us, and mounting our new ponies, we continued our way for another hour up the valley, till we reached a roughly-made wooden

bridge without hand-rail. Over this we had to go very slowly, and one by one, as any great liveliness upon it set it springing up and down enough to pitch one off. Reaching the other side we had to retrace our way up the valley to the Suru, but I had got a good animal and had a splendid gallop with Zurbriggen and Pristi. Resting by a lovely sparkling stream on grassy banks, we waited for Conway, who had got a real bad pony and saddle. An hour and a half more brought us to the fine open valley of Kargil, and our ponies were soon scrambling up the steep little street leading to the *Serai*. We had been twelve hours on the road.

It was a lovely evening and a beautiful scene: for the river wound about its wide stony bed in silver streams, and the tops of the low hills which surround the valley were lit with the gold of the setting sun. As their natural colour was a dusty red, the brilliance was remarkable. The recesses and bed of the valley were veiled in the most beautiful warm purple shadows, and, with the high grey knolls and the clumps of trees, made a magnificent subject. But unfortunately our men were hours behind, and my paints did not arrive in time to catch the full glory of the subject.

There was more life and bustle and the evidences of many travellers passing through and about the big *Serai* at Kargil, and next morning, shortly after we had crossed the river and began to ascend the dusty road up to the great plateau, we were stopped by a tumbling, crushing mass of men and ponies loaded with merchandise from Yarkand and the countries beyond the watershed of India. The strange costumes of the men and their keen, brown faces told of another land than that belonging to the mild Baltis. They still wore the long, thick quilted coats and the round cap trimmed with fur, which they had for keeping them warm crossing the Karakoram Pass. We had met a new people, and our thoughts were carried away to the bare plateaus and distant lands of Central Asia.

The scenery had now taken a different character from the deep, rocky gorges of the Indus, and spreading out in great rolling plateaus of shingle, made a good road for cantering over. The mountains expanded in broad lines, making grand masses of wonderful colour. We descended to the valley of the Wakkha river over well-made broad roads, through pleasant villages, well wooded and

watered by the river and the irrigation streams which led from it.

After lunch the valley narrowed to a gorge, but the road gave us no difficulty; we met many people and caravans, and the journey seemed shorter in consequence. We saw and examined our first *mani*,* and admired the engraving of the prayers on the stones placed on it, passing it on the left side like good believing Buddhists. Shortly after we reached the end of the gorge, and crossing the river, came to Shargol and saw the first pigtails, and startling coloured *chortens* † with hideous monstrosities in relief, painted in red and yellow. The first view of Shargol, with a background of architectural-looking mountains, was most impressive; but the curiously coloured hills took us quite aback. One mighty face looked as if a great colour manufactory had once been in working order and

* A *mani* is a massive stone wall from four to eight feet high, sloping from either side to the centre like a house-roof. Each flat stone in the roof is carved, in the pictorial characters of Tibet, with prayers, generally "Om mani patmi om." See Knight's "Where Three Empires Meet."

† When the corpse of a Buddhist is burnt by the lamas, some of the ashes are mixed with clay and moulded into a little figure. This is placed in a chorten or memorial monument.

had got struck down by some tremendous tornado, spilling tanks of paint, vermilion, cobalt, and orange, for there were daubs of colour all over the place on rocks and cliffs. We camped beside the great *Serai*. I was awakened in the evening by the arrival of Captain Myers, hurrying down in double marches to join his regiment ordered on the Black Mountain Expedition; he was off before us in the morning.

Fording a small stream, we entered the Wakkha valley again, and rode along by the river, where small trees and shrubs grew thickly. On our left, high up against the grey dull sky, we had our first sight of one of the freaks of the architects of these people. On the top of a high and steep rock was built a *gonpa*, or Buddhist monastery. How they got themselves up there, let alone the materials, was a mystery to us. Along the base of the rock were square-built houses of one or two stories; on the roofs were piled up masses of straw and grass for the winter; numerous *chortens* lined the road. This, I thought, was certainly the country for wild, fantastic subjects.

Another hour's canter along the well-trodden road took us past a great rock with an enor-

mous Buddhist figure, carved in relief, round whose feet as high as the knees a little temple was built. I thought that there were two men on the top waving their clothes, but it turned out to be only a couple of ragged petticoats stuck on poles. I looked all round the rock to see how the men got up to put them there, but gave it up; it appeared inaccessible.

The road, ploughed up by numerous caravans, now led round to a side valley, where great low rolling hills of burnt sand stretched away on either hand, and no sign of life broke the dead desolation. I cantered alone along the bed of a dried-up river, for Conway was far behind investigating the figure and temple of the rock. The wind was raw, and I felt exceedingly miserable and outcast in this terrible desert, and my imagination dwelt on the thought of wandering alone, lost in this barren and awful waste. Should a storm or fog arise, and the sand obliterate the tracks, it would be hopeless to find the way. Valleys branched out of each other on every side, a very maze, and each one the same.

I still went on ahead looking for water and a decent place to lunch. My pony ambled on and up, and I reached the top of the pass where a great rock towering high above it

makes a good landmark. It was bitterly cold, and I went on down the other side, the sandy desert still around me, but far away in the distance I had glimpses of rich purple hills and the curious, many-coloured slopes of the country.

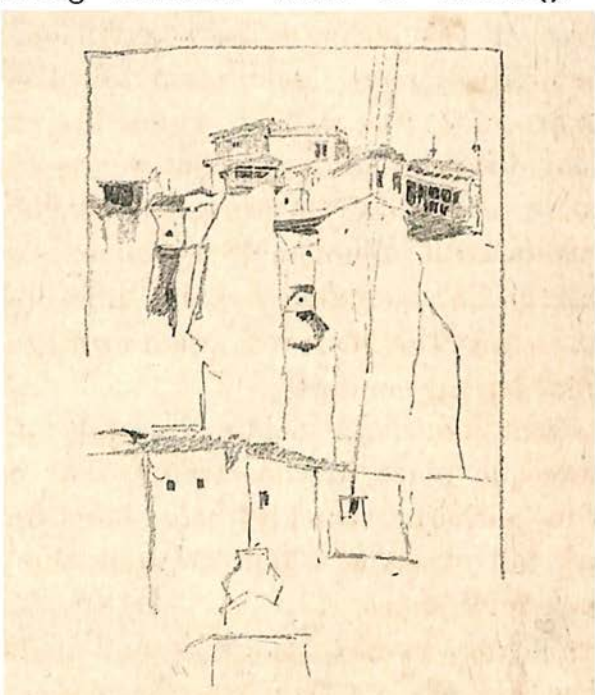
I do not know whether it was this day or not; it may indeed have been before or after, for I was so sick and ill for much of this journey that part of it is jumbled and confused in my mind and notes; but whether this day or not, I remember riding alone through a narrow, wild-looking valley, when suddenly a savage-looking individual with wild staring eyes came from behind a rock and confronted me. My pony stopped, perhaps alarmed at the sudden single figure, and I waited to know what the man wanted. He was a very serious, mad-looking person, with a great knife in his sash, mixed with other smaller instruments of destruction, probably of less use to him. He came up and caught my pony by the bridle. I told him in easy English to let go. Perhaps he did not understand; at any rate he still held on and jabbered dreadfully, even at last catching me by the leg. This was more than I could put up with, and I let him have the butt end of my riding-

whip over the head; he let go with a howl and ran. I daresay if I had understood the poor devil he meant no harm, but I was sick, and ill to deal with just then.

On, still on, and now my miserable, lazy beast of an animal would do no more than a crawl. How I hated that brute! I had turned into a broad, open valley, and lay at the edge of the road while the beast grazed on the thistles. There was a low-walled, flat-roofed series of houses, on the roofs of which the curiously ugly women with their wonderful headgear were spreading out some grass to dry. Out across the valley rose marvellous shaped spiky hills, with the still more marvellous buildings on top, mostly in a ruined state. Karbir joined me where I lay, and informed me that lunch had been taken by the party after crossing the pass, so he and I made our way to the *Serai* of Karbu, that being the name of the valley and the village. The villagers in charge received us, and I set them to work sweeping the built-up platform near the *Serai*, and amused myself making notes of them till my companions arrived.

We had the same scenery next day without any variation. We crossed the Futu La, and, resting on the opposite side by an artificial

pond of water, went down through sand gullies to the Lama-yuru valley. Turning the corner, the first sight of the town was a revelation, used as we now were to the vagaries of the Buddhist architects. A bewildering fantastic series of buildings was



erected on top of a series of earth towers, and, built in between the spaces that separated them, innumerable *chortens* of all sizes and shapes seemed to cover the whole plain at the bottom, hardly leaving room to pass between them. For miles along the road

over which we were riding were great long platforms, covered completely with stones inscribed with prayers, and we felt like Moses on the burning mount, inclined to take off our shoes, for we were surely on holy ground. We passed through the gateway of a great *chorten* at the entrance to the village, and were in the streets, and passed to an enclosure of trees, the wall of which had to be broken down to let us in, as we could not sleep in the *Serai*. A very Chinese-looking individual with innumerable instruments stuck in his girdle, including a knife, informed us that he was the boss and would do what was needful for our comfort.

I went out and made a sketch of the picturesque place in the evening, but heavy clouds, gathering thickly, soon burst into a smart fall of snow which covered the hills with a grey sheet.

I felt very ill next morning and unable to eat, so, hungry and sick, I mounted my pony and passed out of the village, whose white walls shone golden against a blue sky, into a narrow valley between the hills and great earth pyramids of old lake deposit, looking as if a touch would send them crashing down. Crossing and re-crossing the little stream that

tumbled amongst the stones, and exchanging greetings with the driver of another caravan of merchandise, we reached a *dak* wallah's hut and seated ourselves in the shade of a great cave. The keeper of the hut brought us apples. We ate, and smoked, and crossed the bridge, and went on down the valley till we reached the Indus once more, where the sun shone pitilessly out of the throbbing hot grey sky, and the bare treeless hills reflected its burning heat. We crossed the frail wooden bridge, and, passing through the fort which guarded it, the Kashmiri officer in charge gave us salutation, and we passed out of the shade and entered Ladak proper. Going on through the rock-strewn, sandy valley, watching the wonderful play of colours on the rocks around, we reached the valley of Khalsi, and, under the deep shadows of a great tree, the natives brought us baskets of ripe red apples and apricots, and we drank of the cool stream and were satisfied. Then once more on over the rock-strewn slopes, passing many *manis*, and also caravans bearing the merchandise of northern lands to the rich cities of far Southern India. On reaching Nurla we found a good *Serai*, with very fair rooms and windows of fretted woodwork. We had *charpois* to sleep on, so we rested comfortably.

This day's travel and its interest were almost swallowed up in the terrible agony of internal pain I suffered, but I remember the beautiful sea-green colour of the river, now still as a lake, and now flaked with white as it rushed over the shallows, and then the monotonous, rolling, rusty plains. I was alone with Karbir and the owner of the pony. Nearly every hundred yards I had to get off and lie down with pain, and then mounted again, held upon the pony by my companions. Reaching a fairly easy rolling upland of desert, I made myself walk for relief, while I sent Karbir on to ask Conway to stop at the first possible camping-ground, as I was unable to go on. The hours were, and are, a painful dream, but I remember rain-laden, wind-driven clouds, whose rags mottled the distant sheet of grey misty sky that leant on the white ridge of mountains beyond Leh. Then was the welcome sight of trees and villages, and Karbir coming to tell me that the march had stopped, thanks to Conway, who had galloped on and caught up the baggage. So I was able to rest and get some chlorodyne, which eased me almost immediately.

The morning found me much better, and Conway determined to reach Leh that day.

After leaving Bazgo, and passing numerous *chortens*, we passed out into the sandy desolation we now knew so well, and leading the way with a good pony and whoop tally-ho, I broke into a gallop with Conway, while Harkbir clattered after. Going rapidly was a grand sensation, the wind swirling round one's face in cool breezes as we greeted each man we met with his native *jooley*, or how

d'ye do. Stopping at the *Serai* of Fiang, where two gaily-dressed women were resting, I dared Zurbriggen to speak to them, but he would not, though their gay glances were quite invitation enough; they were evidently a Kashmiri beauty and her attendant. Throwing their silk-breeched legs over their ponies' backs, they started off in the opposite direction.

We had a fine canter here over a beautiful piece of turf, but once over it the desert

began again, and suddenly turning to a gap through crumbling sand-mounds, the broad, wide, bleak, treeless plain of Leh, spread out before us, with a straight dusty white track leading to the terraced houses which sparkled in a green setting, a mere speck in the blank plain. Natives with ponies and donkeys, laden with grass, were coming and going; but all made way for us as we cantered in clouds

of dust towards the town. My animal gave up as we entered, and walking slowly through the streets to the bazaar, we saw big horses whose bodies were hidden under bales of cloth, on the top of which the rider sat, his legs at right angles to his body on either side. Passing through the dirty painted gateway, we were in the broad avenue of the bazaar, where crowds of natives of all nationalities were assembled, and great piles of goods before

the windowless shops and stalls told of a busy mart. We went through the bazaar and out at the other end, and entering the narrow, dirty, busy streets, reached at last the travellers' *bangla*. We called on Captain Cubitt, the Joint Commissioner, and on the missionaries, Dr. and Mrs. Weber and Dr. and Mrs. Jones, and felt we had reached comparative civilisation again.

CHAPTER XII.

LEH TO SRINAGAR.

ALMOST all the journey to Leh from Scardu, from the 13th of September to the 26th, I had been far from well, and after my arrival at Leh felt as if I should be completely laid up. Dr. Jones, in charge of the mission hospital, kindly took medical charge of me, and when we left on the 1st of October I was almost in good health again. But my illness unfortunately deprived me of the opportunity of visiting the strange monastery of Hemis, where Lamas revel in fantastic mystery plays, with strange uncanny dances of devils, and hideous masques, and strange chanting and music. Conway and Zurbriggen went there, and I was left alone and sad, and yet I was

not idle all the time; the gay, busy bazaar, alive with traders from beyond the Karakorams, was near me, and the strangely clothed travellers from across the mountains, sat amongst their wares, telling and hearing tales of what had happened in their world during the months that they were journeying. And I walked among them feeling a stranger in a strange wild land. Some of them hearing I should like to buy something, came to the green Bagh of the *bangla*, where I lay in the sunshine, and brought furs of strange beasts, and carpets of barbaric design, for my inspection. The servant who was engaged to attend to me during my illness was a Kashmiri, and having learned a little of their language, he translated it into Hindustani. I suppose between them I was cheated out of something, though the prices, compared with those one pays at home, were ridiculous. I wandered among them during the days I was able to be out, and sketched the strange costumed figures, and entered their camps, where they gathered together and lived and slept, before they started down to the sunny plains of India. I could have stayed amongst them for years, and longed to be able to speak their language, and to hear the stories they could

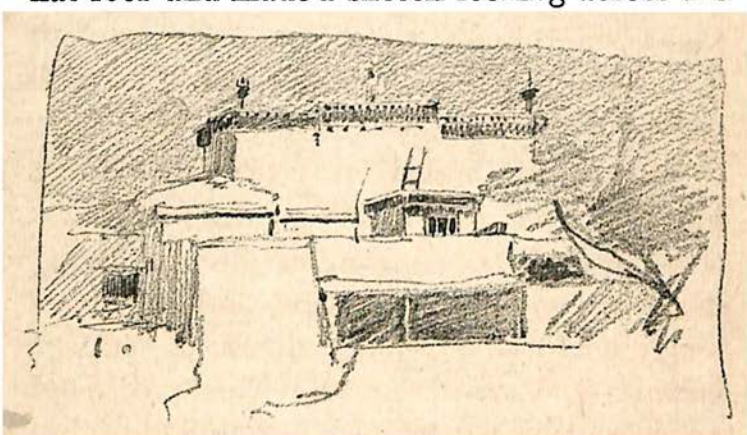
tell of the wild life of their travels, and of the strange countries they had passed through. The fates that guide men's lives willed that I should not know now, but perhaps some day I may visit Central Asia.

Conway arrived from his journey to Hemis, and told me what I had missed, and I could only groan in disappointment, and ask him when we would start for Srinagar. As he had compared his barometers with the Leh ones, finding them correct, there was nothing more to do.

We left Leh on the 1st of October for Kashmir. The first part of the way was that by which we had come up from the bridge over the Dras, near Hardas; the remainder was through a new country to us. My pony was about the worst I had ever had, and the Gurkhas, who were provided with one between them, riding day about, exchanged with me.

When we started we passed through the bazaar, which was now quieter from the number of traders who had departed southwards, and entered on the wide grey plain of dust, looking like a healed scab, from a burn on the earth's dry skin. But above, a beautiful bright blue sky, flaked with feathers and balls of clouds of purest white, was like a silken

canopy spread out above us as we cantered over the old road. My companions were far on in front. Karbir and I enjoyed ourselves greeting and chaffing the numerous traders whose caravans we caught up and passed on the road. We rode right through to Bazgo, where I found my party encamped in the enclosure of the *Serai*. I went up on the flat roof and made a sketch looking across the



valley to the dark hills, on the other side, inlaid with silver veins of snow on their topmost slopes.

Next day we had the dreary upland of sand I had so painfully toiled over on our march up. I had picked the worst pony again. It was fun, when the ponies were brought for us each morning, to see the pretended carelessness with which we made for an animal

we fancied, and our quickened steps when we saw some one else making for it, and the careless way we would say, "I'm afraid I've made a bad selection this morning." We always chose according to the state of the saddles, but I had got a bad one once more, and again exchanged with a Gurkha, this time Harkbir, and got to Saspool, where we examined the interior of the temple. The Lama in charge was very attentive, if we could have understood what he was jabbering about. We entered through a dusty courtyard, with roofed, open sheds that looked like stalls for cattle or ponies, and went through a door to an open hall decorated with designs of curious figures and florid ornament newly painted in the brightest of primary colours and vivid green. Going through another door we stepped into the rich dark gloom of the temple, a square chamber lit from a square aperture above the centre, the light striking down on a dish of beautiful ripe apples. In an inner room were three colossal and ugly figures, dressed in gaudy attire. The walls in the outer or main temple were painted with the same hideous designs as the outer hall, but looked rich and artistic in the heavy shadow cast by the dark ceiling.

I made a pencil note or two of the temple, and we went along the well-made road by the turquoise waters of the Indus to the fine open valley of Nurla, at whose little *Serai* we rested once more.

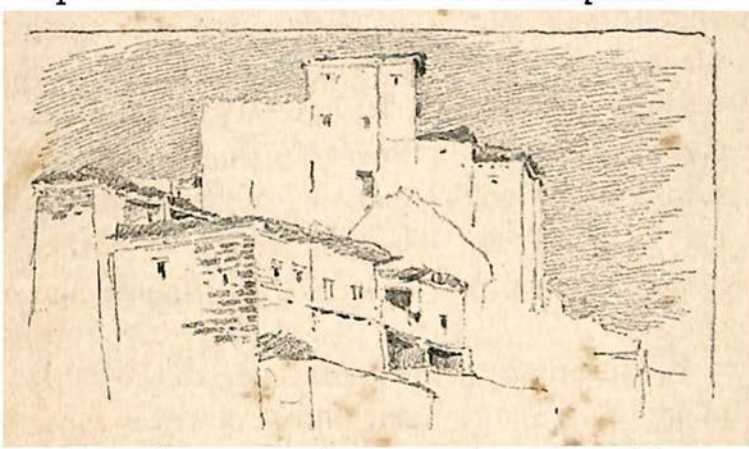
A bright sun greeted us next morning, and having good horses we made rapid progress through the dreary waste, and crossed the bridge over the Indus. Waving greetings to the guard, we passed on and stopped at the Dak house at noon, before commencing the climb of the steep zig-zags to the open valley of Lama-yuru. The harvest was now over, leaving the fields one uniform colour of grey earth, relieved only by the patch of trees around the curiously piled town, with its walls, coloured white and red, against the grey sky. I made another sketch, but a snowstorm came driving the dust about me and spoiled it, and I returned to the tent for shelter. Conway having gone up to the quaintly poised temple on the top of the earth mounds, I followed him, being anxious also to see what was inside, and to find out how they managed to support the buildings on such foundations. The way up was through very steep alleys and dimly lighted passages; the floors were built on beams resting on pyramids of conglomerate.

I reached the dark temple and found Conway busy photographing with light from burning magnesium wire, and a stranger scene could hardly be imagined. The groups of Lamas in their dirty, dark red blankets; and hundreds of hideous little idols dressed in the most tawdry rags, were suddenly lighted with a most intense brilliance which cut out the dark faces in solid black and white, their eyes agape at the unusual fire. While the light lasted we could see the beautifully toned Kakemonos, most lovely bits of colour, hanging from beams all over the place. The whole scene was a perfect picture, and I was glad that I had come.

We returned to the tents and, in the dark of night, a Lama came into Conway's tent, and closing it after him in the most secret manner, brought forth from under his shawl a manuscript from the temple library, beautifully written on long blue strips in white and gold letters. After some bargaining Conway became the purchaser, and told him to go for more. This he did, and with many entreaties not to let the manuscripts be seen, he slunk away richer by many rupees.

Conway sent an order to Karbu to have

ponies ready to take us on further, as he determined to do two marches and reach Shargol in the one day. We were up at six o'clock next morning. It was very cold, and I felt miserable and unwell. A bitter wind was blowing, and all the little streams were frozen over, but we made good way to the top of the Futu La. It was so exposed on



the top that we made down the other side as quickly as possible.

Conway determined to remain behind and drive the baggage ponies, and I, not feeling well enough for that irritable job, went on ahead and caught up Zurbriggen near Karbu. We had entered the open valley, and, after a good canter, I was a little ahead and near a caravan on its way down, when I heard the German language exploding through the air

with a guttural crash of which there was no mistaking the meaning. I looked round and saw Zurbriggen sitting on the ground in front of his pony, who gazed down on his fiery face in the most placid manner. I asked him if he was hurt, but he said no, and he didn't understand how it happened. The horse was walking along most easily, but happened to stop to consider for a minute, and as Zurbriggen had his hands in his pockets, and was not thinking about the animal at all, he went over its head. He mounted again and had just started, when I heard more German of an obviously immoral character. This time Zurbriggen was sitting under his horse; his stirrup had broken, and he was a very angry man indeed. The merchants were enjoying a good grin, and I was nearly choked keeping my laughter in, for he looked too angry to irritate any more.

We reached Karbu at eleven o'clock, and found the lambadhar had not received the letter ordering the ponies, so I hurried him off to get them at once. Conway and the baggage arrived an hour later.

A bitter cold and strong wind met us as we started, but we were sheltered in the valley leading up to the Namika La. On reaching

the top the wind was a fierce, driving, icy blast, and was no better a great part of the way down. We had fairly good horses as long as one had a useful whip, but mine was only a piece of a branch I had broken off a tree at Karbu, and while trying to keep up with Conway and Zurbriggen, it smashed to pieces. My lazy brute immediately dropped to a baggage walk, and as nothing would make him move, my friends were soon lost to sight. I suddenly thought of the hairy Yarkandi cap with wide flappers, that I wore, and one wave of it before his eyes set the beast off as if the devil was after him.

I reached a village, and the broad road I was on gradually narrowed, till it was about a foot broad and on the top of a walled bank, about twenty feet high on one side with a deep pond on the other. I urged on the animal, thinking the road might widen again; but it only got worse and worse. At last there was no turning back, and the animal would go no further. I was under the walls of some village, and my exciting movements and wild garb must have frightened the life out of the inhabitants, for I saw one and all, old and young, carrying away what they could, and making for the hills for all they knew. The

fear and the hurry of every one to put as great a distance as they could between us, rather puzzled me for a moment; but when I saw four men and a woman, probably husbands and wife, leave their threshing like a lot of children, I roared with laughter, and shouted to them to come back, which only made them run the faster. However, the woman, curious to hear what I was saying, or desirous to have a final look at me, stopped, and seeing me

laughing, broke into laughter herself, and calling back one of the flying husbands, sent him to me. The actions of the poor fool trying to keep away from me, and yet do his wife's bidding at the same time, were most amusing.

I had only two words, Shargol, *rusta*, or road; at which he pointed into infinite space. Eventually I got him to take my bridle, and catching hold of a branch of a tree that overhung the wall on which my horse was

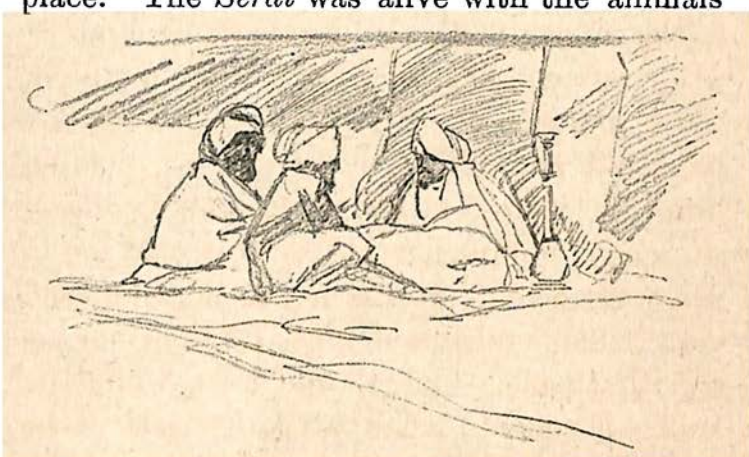
standing, I swung to the ground and, waving an adieu to the Ladaki lady, followed my guide, who led the horse along the wall to a low place and made him jump down.

I reached Shargol very late, but our baggage was two hours later. A very swell-looking Yarkandi merchant, whose caravan filled the *Serai*, gave us tea in tiny cups, sweetened with a lump of sugar-candy as big as my fist, while we waited for our dinner.

I had a good pony next day, but an awful shyer, and the unfortunate part of it was that it would shy in the most awkward places. Once, when descending the narrow valley on the road cut in the side of the hill high above the river bed, the pony watched his shadow till at some turning in the road it dropped over the side and went away down. When it came climbing up out of sight, and jumped over the edge, as it were like a Jack-in-the-box, right under his nose, with a wild leap he scrambled up the almost perpendicular hill at his side. This was very awkward, especially as when I got him turned to come down again the loose rubble gave way. How he kept his feet was as great a marvel as his landing on the road without going over the *khad*.

Leaving this narrow gorge we entered the Wakkha valley, and rested beside the little bridge which spans the stream, and waited for the baggage.

After lunch we had a grand canter down the sandy road of the valley, and mounted the broad plateau about Kargil. Descending to its fertile valley, we camped in our old place. The *Serai* was alive with the animals



and men of our Yarkandi friend of Shargol; in the evening, we had his rugs opened for our inspection. I selected a large white Khotan, one painted with a very barbaric pattern in primary colours; and Conway purchased many. They were all made into a great bale which was not opened, I believe, till it reached London.

Conway sent a telegram to Jack Roudebush

to meet us at Sonamerg, and we felt we were nearing home. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and the deep misty shadows of the valley, with the dark mysterious mountains above it, and the still darker poplars against it all, made a fitting close to our journey through this gloomy land.

We were now to enter on the last stage of our journey to Srinagar, down the Dras valley to the Sind valley and the vale of Kashmir.

I secured a splendid pony next morning, whose greatest ambition was to show how fast he could go uphill; there was no holding him, he had a mouth that pulling made as much impression on as it would on a runaway engine. It was fun to see the road clear; the merchants dropped off their horses, and the coolies took to the hills, while the animal seemed to laugh at the excitement he made, and to enjoy showing me how near he could skirt the edge of a crumbling precipice. A very high *parri* nearly pumped him, and I was glad to dismount and tie him up and wait for the others, who did not turn up for over two hours. After lunch I kept behind the baggage, and as it was impossible for my energetic friend to get past his slow-going companions, I had time and comfort to enjoy

the beautiful scenery we were passing through, and it certainly was startlingly beautiful. The steep hill-sides of the deep valley were the colour of old gold. The Dras river flowed and tumbled along its bed like a great ribbon of deep turquoise, varying in tint from pale cobalt green to deep rich purple, with all the symphonies between, while the banks were bordered with shrubs, which varied from the brightest gold to fiery crimson, beside dark green rocks.

Slowly wending our way through such scenery and drinking in its beauty, we reached the bridge we had crossed from Hardas on our way up. We did not cross it now, but kept along the bank, and shortly after reached the *Serai* and wooded Bagh of Tashgom.

In the early morning it was very cold, and we stood and shivered till the baggage was loaded up. I stayed behind to help to drive the loaded animals along. A short distance after we left Tashgom the valley opened into a broad plain, with many villages: the fields were bare, the crops having been already

gathered in for the winter. Here and there a few villagers could be seen winnowing the grain in the breeze. The valley narrowed to a deep gorge with great rock ravines down which rushed the green tumbling water.

We stopped at Dras for an hour, and Colonel Le Messurier, who was encamped there, photographed us. We continued our journey, passing the whitewashed fort, caught up our luggage, and, giving the men instructions to hurry along, we cantered over the river valley through the golden shrub to the bleak *Serai* of Muitan, in full view of snow-covered peaks once more.

One of the fathers of the Catholic Mission at Leh, on his way up from Srinagar, arrived shortly after and had dinner with us, and a pleasant chat and smoke.

When the cold grey morning crept in from over the surrounding hills the weary work of trying to get the baggage animals to go at anything more than a snail's pace commenced once more. We plunged our hands deep in our coat pockets, and I tied my fur-lined cap about my ears for a little warmth, till the sun rose over the mountains and shed its warm and welcome rays upon us.

The road to the top of the Zoji La is along

an easy grass incline, so easy that we did not know we were on the top of the pass, till we noticed the flow of some streams from hidden glaciers above the road. But down to the Sind valley, from the top of the pass, is steep enough. We crossed the ravine by a bridge of old avalanche snow, and commenced the steep descent by zig-zags to the beautifully wooded valley in all the glory of its golden autumn tints: it was so steep that I preferred walking to riding down. I arrived first at the hut at Baltal and found a sahib preparing for lunch. He was on his way to Scardu to shoot, and his *shikari* was a brother of Jack's *shikari*. He told us about everybody, what they had done, what they were doing, and what they were going to do. We also had lunch here, and as I expected Jack to be at Sonamerg to meet us, I determined to ride there at once. Leaving my companions to come on in their leisurely fashion, I made things hum through the Sind valley, but found no Jack when I arrived, so sat down on the banks of the river and felt sad and hungry for many an hour. My poor old pony had come well, so I sent a post-office clerk for

some fodder and asked for letters. Curiously enough there was a telegram for Bruce which had been there a long time, but as telegrams were flying all over the country calling in for the Black Mountain Expedition the officers on leave, I was not surprised.

So anxious was I to see my friend, that I determined to do the remaining five marches next day, changing ponies wherever I could get them. Zurbriggen agreed to accompany me, and turning in early for what sleep we could get in the little time before us, we prepared for the morrow.

At four o'clock, after a light breakfast, we stole quietly to the stalls where the horses were tied. I selected a couple, and, carefully feeling that all was in order after they were saddled, Zurbriggen and I mounted. The men wrapped in their thick blankets looked like assistants in some dread conspiracy, as we silently started off over the moonlit grass. Crossing the wooden bridge that spans the Sind river, we quickly trotted over the grass slopes to the dip into the dark wooded glen.

The gloomy shadows frightened the animals, and it was with difficulty they could be got to move. Black darkness from the thick pine trees enveloped us, and we were glad to

reach the bridge re-crossing the Sind; the clear road cut along its bank was grey white like a river. We were silent, and felt fearfully cold and uncomfortable, the dense wooded slopes rising high above us on either hand, and the deep dark gorge down which the river tumbled with a ghostly noise, seemed uncanny and full of things that crept and hissed, until the dawn began to break and lit up the scene with a cold grey light. As I reached a corner my pony broke into a canter, and I commenced my long ride to Srinagar and Jack. Rough, loose stones covered the road; they shot out from the pony's shoeless hoofs like hail. As we dashed round a bend a great hole in the newly-mended road frightened the beast, and he leapt aside, nearly crushing my leg against the bank. I rode on past an encampment of native navvies, and up through the trees, rattling through a stony, tortuous wood, down again to the bank of the river, and as I went, the rushing air was divine nectar. I passed Gund at eight, where some sahibs' tents were pitched. The ropes, which were stretched across the road in the most thoughtless manner, nearly tripped the pony. I heard afterwards they were memsahibs.

Allowing my pony to walk, I reached a

level, shrub-covered valley, and Zurbriggen caught me up. We then cantered on quickly, chatting of the joys that awaited us in Srinagar that evening.

We reached Khasgan at eleven o'clock, and by the time we had aroused every mongrel in the country to yelping and barking by our shouts for the lambadhar, a boy went for him. Demanding ponies to be brought out at once, he informed me that there were none within two hours of the village, that they were on the hills grazing—a palpable lie. I told him to have two good ponies brought to us within ten minutes, or he would hear of it, saying that I had a *Barra parwana* from the Maharajah's Durbar, which fortunately, for him, he did not ask to see. We certainly looked two very disreputable ruffians compared with the gay crowd he was used to in the summer invasion, as this valley was one of the summer resorts of the English.

Meanwhile Zurbriggen, in the shade of a big chinar tree, was lighting the spirit lamp of a self-cooking tin he had brought in his pocket, to the amusement of a crowd of natives who had gathered. We shared it together, and in less than the ten minutes allowed a strong pony without saddle or bridle was

driven up, and the lambadhar explained it was his own, and that there was not another to be had. Giving him some strong advice about getting others at once, two more were mysteriously produced. He brought some old pack saddles and a very gaudy polo saddle of his own, which Zurbriggen appropriated immediately. I had suspicions about that saddle, it was too grand. I picked out the strongest pack saddle and made a good seat with blankets which they brought me, and, strapping all on, manufactured stirrups out of rope. Thus provided, we started with a boy runner to bring the animals back.

Passing through a wooded lane, where I left Zurbriggen trying to keep his gaudy seat together, for it had parted on the first canter, I entered the open valley. My horse was a good one, and went splendidly. Rounding a corner sharply, a long caravan of ponies returning from India occupied the road, and I was in among them before I knew: my knee came in contact with the load of one of them as it rushed past me to save itself from going down the *khad*, and the drivers were up and down the

hills, out of the way in no time. Getting through this and flying on I entered a lane blocked with sheep, and so jammed together that the herd had to lift some of them up to make a passage for me. But soon I was on the level, broad, sandy road, with the vale of Kashmir before me in hot, misty haze, looking as if there might be a straight horizon line if it were not so indistinct. This was a thing I had not seen since I left the plains of India. The glad, bounding freedom of being on flat ground of any extent was magnificent, and my pony seemed to enjoy it as much as I.

I met a nobleman of some sort riding with a large retinue, accompanied by a camel with a covered *doolie* on top, probably containing some favourite wife. The men dismounted and salaamed as I rushed by them. But away on the distant sandy road, in immaculate white, a sahib ambled leisurely along with helmet as big as an umbrella. The get-up and the style proclaimed in a loud voice that it was Jack, and soon we were shaking hands. He remarked that he felt more like getting out of the way and turning back than advancing to meet me, such a sight I looked. It had never struck me, till I was trotting beside this white rose of purity, that my pony had not been groomed since it came into the

world, and what with the old rags of blankets forming my saddle, my rope stirrups, my breeches, which were mere ribbons held at the waist and knee, the hairy Yarkandi cap flapping about my ears, and my heavy climbing coat, and myself unshaven and unwashed, I certainly looked a sight in the bright sunshine of the Garden of the World.

At Gungurbal we sat under the shade of the trees and waited for Zurbriggen. Jack's *syce*, who followed him, had a parcel of seed-cake and biscuits, so I ate and was satisfied for a while, and drank deep draughts of the running brook. I had been riding thirteen hours.

Zurbriggen reached us an hour later, and the air vibrated with German greetings. Jack said it was no distance to the boat on the Dal Lake at the Nasim Bagh, so we did not trouble about changing horses, and cantered easily across country to the calm repose of the boats. There champagne and other unheard-of luxuries were in abundance, and I had a bath and got into a suit of Jack's, and felt a civilised being once more.

The day had been a little too much for me, so I turned into bed, there joining in the revels of Zurbriggen and Jack, and we made a glorious night of it.

Conway joined us two days after.

CHAPTER XIII.

SRINAGAR.

AFTER Conway's arrival at the Nasim Bagh the boats were got under way, and with the gliding, soft motion over the calm still waters our last six months seemed to pass away like the shadow of a dream. When we reached Srinagar we were refused permission to use one of the houses in the Munshi Bagh, and had to camp in the Chinar Bagh, or the bachelors' camping-ground, and do all our packing and rearranging of the collections for England in the open.

The place had such a fascination for me that I settled with Conway to stop in Srinagar to sketch, while he went down to India and had necessary interviews with the authorities over the results of the expedition. And this rest and pleasure time for me was not without interest and excitement.

While we were in the mountains the whole

town had been devastated by cholera, which its state of sanitation richly deserved. But even in relation, the reports of what occurred were very horrible. The plague struck down the people in thousands, and vast piles of corpses were burnt in the open places. By night, boats were for ever journeying with their dead loads through the stricken city. For at last the inhabitants were dying at the rate of a thousand a day, and now neither fire nor any ordinary method could dispose of the unnumbered bodies. Those who were left were stricken with panic, and at last, regardless of any religious rites, they disposed of their own dead by throwing them into the river, which became a floating tomb, and carried disease and destruction as it flowed. For the bodies were stranded upon the rocks and shallows, and in parts of the Jhelam men had to break up barriers of them with poles, pushing them, like caught timbers, into the stream.

Jack told me that he had sent a coolie, who had been with him all the journey, from Scardu for tobacco, and the man did not return. He found out later that the poor fellow had died on the second day of his arrival in the city. He himself had a little experience of

the cholera, for after his arrival by night at Bandipur, he was awaked in the early morning by an awful smell of burning flesh. When he looked out he saw one of the dreadful dead heaps blazing close by his tent. He was ill that night, but escaped after going through all the agonies of death. And after the cholera came fire. About a quarter of the

town was burnt to the ground, as the ruined and blackened walls still standing on the bank of the river testified. But all these horrors were past. The present was with us, and a time for rest.

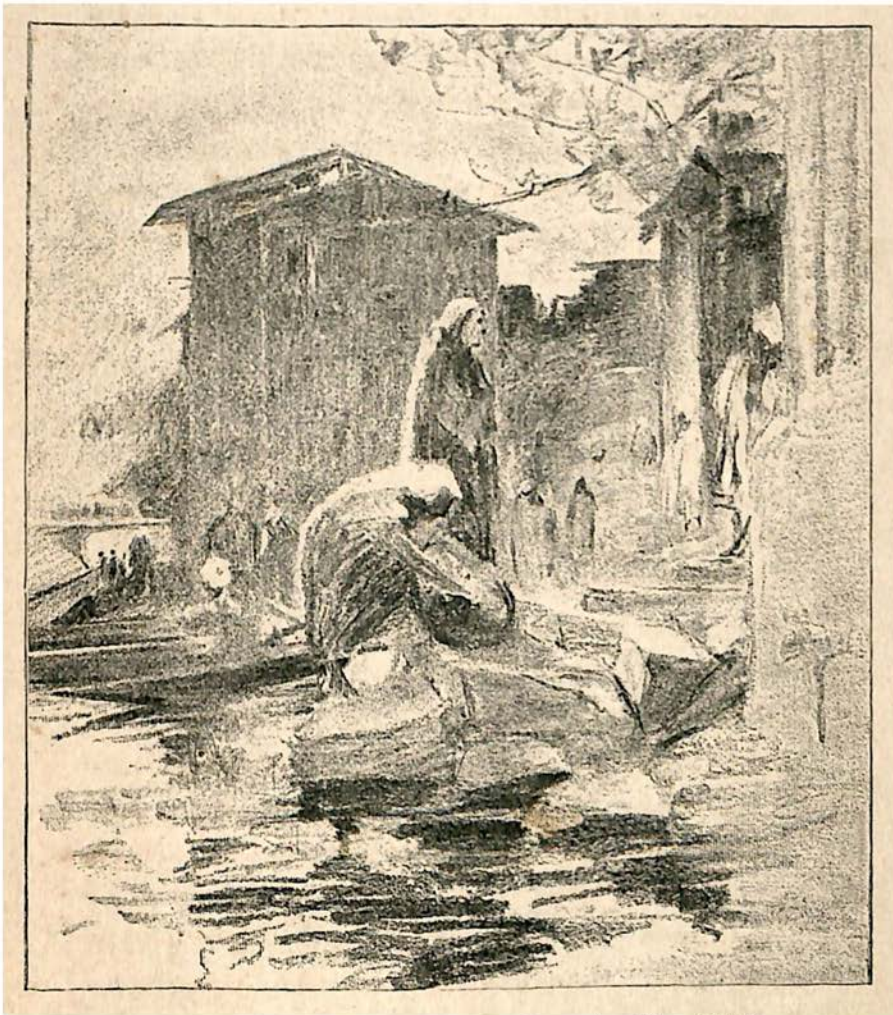
Before Conway left, we had an invitation from Samad Shah to a Kashmiri breakfast, which we accepted.

On our arrival at the steps leading to our host's house we were received by the only representative left by the cholera of a family of four brothers. He led us to a pleasant little room overlooking the river. We were seated at an ordinary table with a white cloth. Our host did not sit down with us, but stood by and explained the various dishes as they were brought in; they were certainly the most curious mixture of stuffs I have ever eaten. The first dish was something like porridge to look at, but very sweet, and nearly everything else was of the same flavour; patties, tarts, and cakes, made of unknown ingredients, followed each other in quick succession, and for drink we had the usual Kashmiri tea, sweetened and flavoured with herbs—not a bit like the tea we have in England.

After breakfast we went down to his shop and inspected carpets and rugs, curtains and costumes. The annual tribute of shawls paid to the Queen by the Maharajah of Kashmir was spread out ready for packing, and we examined their beautiful work, while the merchant explained to us the labour required to produce it.

We purchased carpets, rugs, and curtains

till our money would go no further, and bid farewell to our sleek but very business-like host.

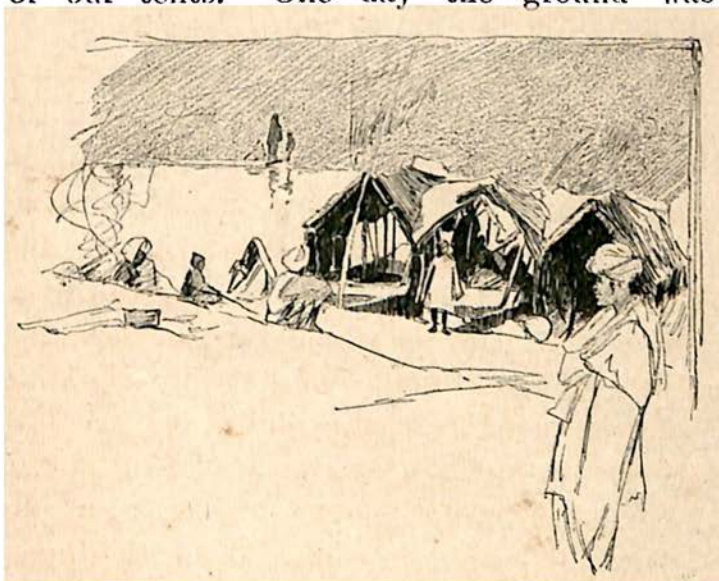


There is always a great day in the Chinar Bagh after the harvest, when the Maharajah

has received his share of the produce, which I believe is two-thirds of the crops, he supplying the seed for the next sowing, for he gives a free distribution of cooked rice to the people. The greater merchants are entertained apart, in enclosures built for the occasion. For the poor, portions of rice are placed in little earthen dishes, and hundreds of these are spread in rows on the grass, while a great crowd surges and presses around till the word is given, when they simply fall on top of the food, crushing it into the ground and smashing the dishes. I was right in the middle of them and saw one man spread himself over as many as he could cover, gathering others with the sweep of his arms, and eating what he could reach in front of his face. It seemed to me a great waste of food at the time, but I don't suppose a grain was lost, for I saw the natives sweeping and gathering in their shawls any remains they could pick up, as long as the light remained.

Our tents were pleasantly situated under the great spreading chinars, beside the narrow canal, which was always gay with many boats passing up and down. Our own boats moored in front of the camp, with the wives and children of the boatmen constantly pound-

ing grain, made a picturesque foreground. Merchants, too, were always arriving and departing with boats loaded with the wares which they had brought for our inspection. Almost every day there was a display of some sort spread out over the grass in front of our tents. One day the ground was



strewn with silver ware, and another day with copper, then came the skin merchant and the papier maché worker, and often the whole lot together. They didn't mind if we would not buy, "only just look at the beautiful wor-rik, Sahib," and if we told them we were too busy to look, "Oh! I don't mind, Sahib; I wait here all day; only Sahib

see my wor-rik. You not look at any other."

One day one of them came to me with a ring.

"Hazor!" (your Highness).

"Well, what do you want?"

"I want to show Sahib this beautiful ring."

"I don't want any ring: Jao!" (go).

"But, Sahib, I sell this ring cheap, very cheap."

"Jao! Jeldi! (go quickly!) I tell you I don't want a ring, I have no time to look."

"I wait, Hazor. If Sahib only see my ring you buy."

"Oh, wait and be hanged to you, but get away from this."

And off he went about a hundred yards and sat down and looked into space. About two hours later he returned, and the same palaver went on, but he wouldn't go till I attempted to kick him. This went on all day. At last I could stand it no longer, so I said—

"Show me the ring!" and his face lighted up till I felt like kicking him again. "Well, what do you want for it?"

"Oh, Hazor, it is a beautiful ring. I make it myself."

"Here, you old scoundrel, this is not a stone, it's a bit of glass."

"Ah, Sahib, e-stone is good e-stone, gil-ass no, Sahib. I show you how you know." And he went through some fakement of breathing on it.

"Well, what do you want for it, you old swindler?"

"Me not e-swindle, Sahib, I sell cheap."

"Well, what do you want?"

"I let Sahib have it for fifty rupees."

"Here, take the ring, and you had better make tracks quick. Jao!"

"But, Sahib, what you give?"

"I wouldn't give you ten rupees for it. Now, get."

"Oh but, Sahib, I could not do that. I not make anything."

"Jao!"

As he was going he shouted—

"I let Sahib have it for forty-five rupees."

He came back next day, and the same game went on. At the end of it he had come down to twenty rupees.

On the third day he came to ten, but I said I did not want a ring.

"Oh, but Sahib said he give ten rupees."

The end of the matter was I gave him ten, and he went away smiling; perhaps he had made two or three *pice* out of it. At any rate he had done business.

But the whole thing is a farce, for if one thinks he has paid too much he has only to go to the Baboo, who has a regular list of prices which the dealers must accept, and if the quality of the article is doubtful, the Baboo has it assayed, and the dealer is fined or imprisoned if it is not up to the standard.

At last the day arrived when Conway and Zurbriggen took their departure. They were going first to Abbottabad, Zurbriggen having accepted an engagement to train Gurkhas as guides during the winter at Gilgit; and Conway was going on to Simla. When he had finished with the authorities he would telegraph us to join him. However Fate arranged otherwise, and we did not see Conway again till we reached London. I heard later that Zurbriggen's engagement fell through.

I devoted my time now entirely to sketching, from my boat, which I had taken down every day, the many subjects along the river. It was to me a time of great pleasure, for day by day the movement and light revealed some new beauty, and I lived in a seventh heaven that seemed full of music, divine and sweet.

Every evening in camp, when the grey, soft haze over the Bagh was lit up with the

golden glory of the setting sun, we sat with our companions, some of whom were officers coming down from Gilgit, and smoked and talked of what each had seen and done, of war and adventure, and of living a life that made me feel it was the life a man should live. As I thought of the dreary days in the busy bustle of London, and contrasted them with the glorious open life around, I felt that here was my abiding-place. But an irresistible craving for the troughs of Egypt which I had been used to, won the victory, and I despised myself as I yielded.

But we had occasional periods of activity, for one night we were all sitting dreaming, and watching the lazy curls of smoke floating through the still air, when a red glow threw up the trees on the opposite side of the Bagh in black relief. Some one remarked: "Is that the town on fire again?" and a boatman said that it was only weeds burning. But just then some men on the opposite side began crying out that the temples were burning. This brought us to life, and we hastily ordered the small boat to be got ready and the lanterns to be lighted, as no one is allowed to go about the town after dark without one.

Our two friends and Jack and I got to the

boat, and our man soon pushed it over. We started for the town, threading our way through dark streets, in some of which holes, ranging from a foot to six feet deep, and quite as wide, met us at every turn. We soon found the lamps unnecessary, the brilliancy of the fire, which had now attained gigantic proportions, was so intense.

To reach the fire we had to crush through a crying, moaning mob of natives, and then run the gauntlet of the showers of household gods the inhabitants of the yet untouched houses were throwing into the street. For earthenware pots and all sorts of breakable articles were pitched out indiscriminately, only to be smashed to fragments on the stones below. We could see that an immense area of the town was in flames, with absolutely no means of putting it out. Standing where we were, warning cries reached us, and, hastily running back, we just escaped being buried in the *débris* of a house which fell right across the street, its attachments to another house having been burned through, causing it to fall bodily. As not a house in the town but depended on its fellow for support to keep it upright, things were getting a bit lively.

Passing through the dark entries of a house in which there was weeping and wailing from unseen women, we entered the yard, and as cries reached us that the temple was in danger —we could see its silver minarets gleaming high above in the glow of the fire—we scrambled in its direction over the intervening walls, and reached the ghaut leading to the river from the temple steps. We were now close to the walls of a burning house, the ceiling being quite burned through, and falling in. We saw women rushing almost into the heart of the fire to rescue some articles, but the flames became too fierce, and they turned back, just in time, as the last floor fell in. Some Hindu merchants, with their families, were sitting on the goods they had been able to rescue, making absolutely no attempt to assist; naked natives were rushing in the wildest confusion up from the river, carrying jars of water, which they threw on the expiring flames of an entirely gutted house. Seeing a small hand-pump with a good quantity of hose, which the men had got tied up in knots, so that no water came through, though they pumped for all they knew, Jack and I rushed in and straightened it out, and then directed them to

the best place to work to save the temple. As each man wanted to play it on his own house, and fought with the others to get the end of the hose for that purpose, Captain Duncan, one of our companions, endeavoured to make the men form a line down to the river, in order to pass the jars of water along it and keep the tank of the pump full. Meanwhile Jack and I had a ladder erected in the courtyard of the temple, to enable them to play on the surrounding houses, which were now burning fiercely. The fools could not understand that it was better to keep a continual stream of jars passing along, while they themselves stood still, but broke the line, each running for himself.

All this time the flames hissed and roared, sending volumes of smoke and flames up into the still air, lighting up a very pandemonium, while most of the staring, crying, howling, white-robed natives looked on inactive. Tall, naked figures stood on high walls outlined against the fiery smoke, and, with long poles, were directing and pushing in another direction the burning beams of a house which threatened to fall near the temple. The water ran down, as most of the jars got broken on

the way in the hurry of the carriers through the dark entries, and after showing them how and where to direct the hose when they got more, I returned to the ghaut steps. We calculated that there were about one hundred and fifty houses burning now, so again pushing and crushing through the crowded alleys, we saw some other Europeans on the roof of a house, and ascended to see the sight. Emerging on the flat roof, we had a grand view of a vast sea of flame, puffing and boiling in clouds of fiery smoke, the flames licking up in great tongues every balk of timber like wax, while showers of fiery sparks swirled and spurted in the crash of falling walls.

The troops had been got out to pull down houses, so as to cut off the fire from spreading any further, and every other Sepoy seemed to have brought a bugle, and blew it for all he was worth. We saw one whom we felt we could have shot for the row he was making. Some Sepoys close to us were unroofing a house, while the owner kept expostulating with them on the ground that his house was not on fire. He thought it a great hardship that it should be touched. He sat in the window and talked to them, drawing his head in every minute as part of the roof fell past

him. The house was on fire before they got all the woodwork off it, and we left for a further sight of the fire from the opposite side of the river, so I do not know if the old boy stuck to his house to the last.

We saw a wonderful sight on reaching the bridge on the opposite bank of the river, for thousands upon thousands of inhabitants were ranged, row above row, on the banks, and all the balconies and roofs were crowded. The bright-coloured houses, lit up with fire, were a blazing sea of colour, against which the red faces and white robes of the natives made a mosaic of marvellous beauty. Above it the gilded minarets of the temples pierced the black curtain of the sky. We joined the crowd, and gazed in awe at the magnificent scene of destruction.

Once more entering a boat, as the area of the fire, cut off from the surrounding houses by blasts of gunpowder, gradually burned itself out, we returned to the quiet of our camps, after this grand display of fireworks at the end of our adventures.

The baggage, containing our collection made in Hunza Nagyr, had not reached Srinagar, through the overpowering quantity of supplies being carried up to provision Gilgit

during the winter, and, as we heard from an officer who had just come down, that he had seen boxes addressed to Conway lying broken about the Burzil Pass, we decided to go to Bundipur, and, if need be, up the road to Gilgit again. At Bundipur we found a different state of affairs from what we had met with on our first visit, for coolies and ponies and yaks were returning and departing with the grain and provision for the Gilgit garrison. An English sergeant in charge told us that Conway's boxes had just been sent on by road to Srinagar, so we returned to our boats. On the way back to the town I stopped on the bank of the Wulah lake to make a sketch of a grand thunderstorm over the Tragbal, and, unluckily, got a chill.

On reaching Srinagar the next day—the 4th of November—while examining the boxes I was seized with the fever that laid me up, most of the time unconscious, till the 14th of December. I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Neve for his kind attention through it all, and for all the kindness I received from every one.

I believe, though I am not sure, that I suffered from typhoid. At any rate I had a very bad time, and was a perfect wreck and

a mere skeleton. Jack nursed me through it, and when I was able to travel we went on to Bombay. On the 22nd of December we sailed for England.

I do not know if, in the unseen course of events, I shall ever be in the north of India again. It is, perhaps, as unlikely as it seems to me infinitely desirable. For the year I spent on this expedition was the fullest in my life, the strangest, and the most wonderful. If I should see no more of that Orient, which was a revelation to me, both of humanity and of nature, I learnt much and made many friends and got to understand things which were once a mystery to me. For there I came closest into contact with real men and real fighters; there I learnt what it is to engage in a hand-to-hand conflict with the mightiest forces of the universe, and there I saw what perseverance, foresight, and endurance can hope to accomplish.

THE END.

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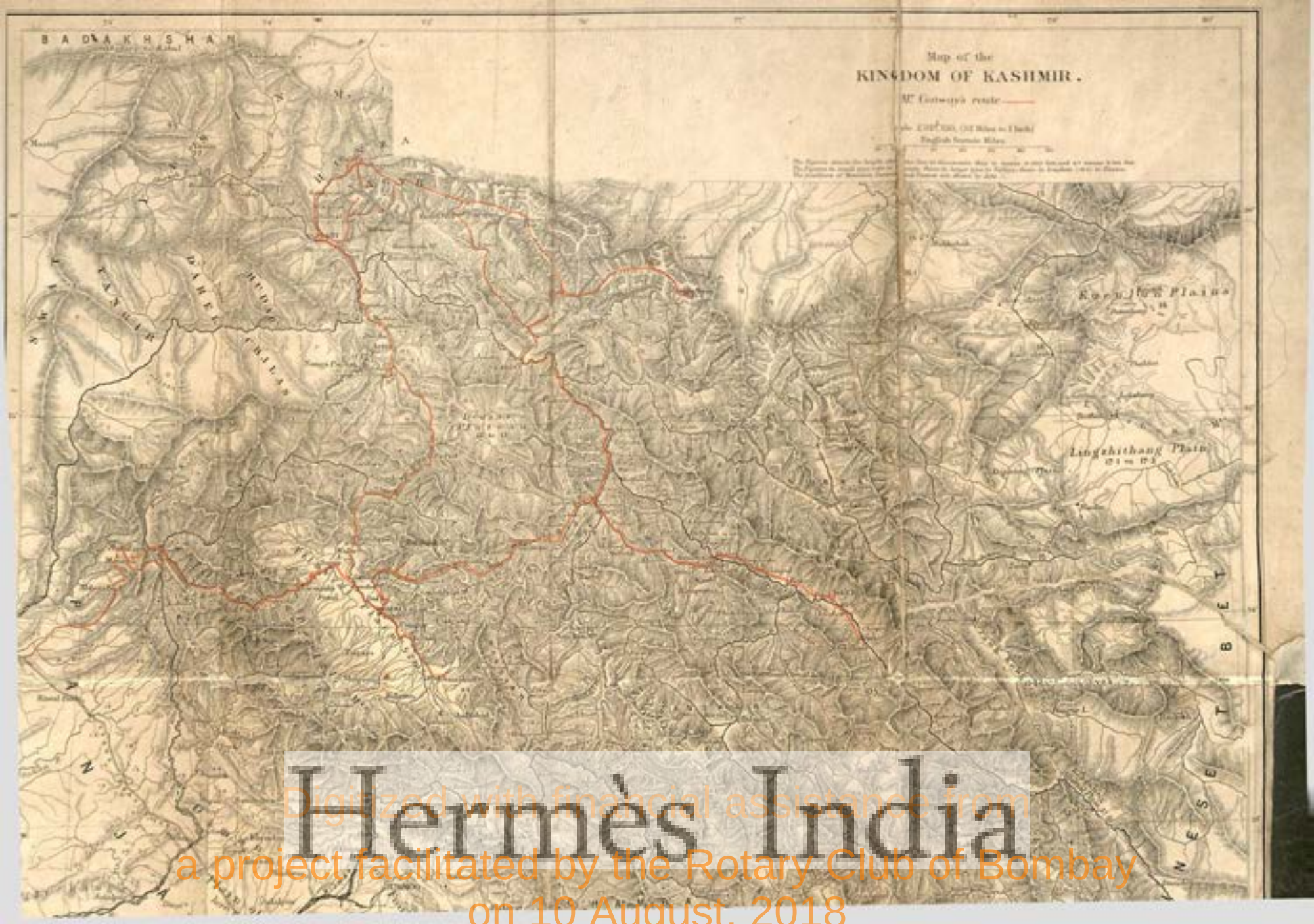

Hermès India
Digitized with financial assistance from
a project facilitated by the Rotary Club of Bombay
on 10 August, 2018